

Reincarnation as a Father

I don't recognize the ceiling above me. Oh... Just why does my head hurt so much? Did I wake up too fast...? As my eyes fluttered open, my vision was blurred with streaks of unfamiliar silver.

As it came into focus, that beautiful and shimmering coin like silver in my view became more and more vivid... and I saw that it was the colour of the hair belonging to the woman who anxiously looked down at me.

"Are you feeling better, my Lord?"

When I slowly raised my body instead of immediately replying, she supported my shoulder as I pulled myself up. Then, I saw a mirror in front of me... And my breath caught in my throat.

What was reflected in that mirror was a man in his middle ages, his face cold and sharp... He looked something like what I imagined a dandy would be, but no matter how undeniably handsome the man in the mirror was, it wasn't a face I had ever seen before.

But, as that headache continued to burn through my temples, the memories came rushing in... My name is Callis Fall. I held the position of the Duke. As for the woman I saw in the reflection beside me, she was my wife as well as the Duchess, Sasha Fall.

Alongside my daughter, Laurier Fall, we're a family of three... Hm? Laurier?

And just as a memory that didn't belong to this land of aristocracy and feudalism rose to the forefront of my mind... I remembered too that I do not belong to this world. I knew that I was a working man in Japan... but I couldn't remember any of the details, not even my name. But, just why was it that in this ridiculous situation, the only thing I can remember was a romantic game for young girls called **【Pure Love Princess ~ You and Lovey Dovey ~】** ... but why on earth can I even recall something like that in the first place?

"My Lord...?"

"I'm fine... Sasha?"

"Yes, my Lord."

I called out to the beauty in front of me with some trepidation, but it seems like her name was definitely Sasha.

I need to arrange my thoughts

As the conflicting memories of two lives raged in my skull, a singular thought stayed clear in the distortion... The four words 'Reincarnated in Another World' emerged through the storm.

I see, so she really is my wife... but in my memories, she and I never had a close relationship. No, rather, to be more precise it seems that this man called Callis... or rather, I, never had much interest in her in the first place...

"No... I'm sorry. Did I collapse?"

“Yes. You must have been overtired. The doctor said that you had no major injuries, however... I accompanied you just in case but... ah... was I a bother to you...?”

She drew back slightly in apprehension... but, when I saw that fear in her eyes, I reflexively reached out and laid my hand on her head.

“Eh...?”

“Sasha... Thank you very much for watching over me. I truly am glad that you’re my wife.”

“...Eh!? T-that’s not... I... Um...”

Sasha’s face went deeply red as she stammered bashfully... Huh? That’s strange... We do have a child together, so this level of touching shouldn’t be enough to... Ah, I think I understand.

Going from my memories, the relationship between us had always been something cold... so if I did something like this so suddenly, of course, she would be confused.

No, but... honestly, she really is lovely. Despite being over thirty years old and a mother, she still had a youthful sense of beauty that would challenge any woman ten years younger... And, how should I put it, when I saw her blush and look at her hands shyly at that slight skinship... I felt something.

“Sasha...”

“Ah... M-my Lord...?”

As I brought my hand down to rest on her cheek, I could feel her skin react sensitively as her voice bubbled up... Ah, way too lovely!!

I barely managed to contain myself at the sight... but, trying not to startle her anymore, I gently spoke to her, not letting my emotions show on my face.

“Sasha... Do you love me?”

“T-that’s...”

“As for me... I’ve always been concerned about our marriage as something political – so until now, I have treated you quite coldly... But, I truly wish to hear your honest feelings now.”

“...My Lord... Um... Are you really not feeling well, after all...?”

Well... I guess it makes sense to be received like this after saying something so suddenly.

That being said... I do really want to hear her feelings.

“I understand now that I have been wrong about you all this time... So, I was hoping that we could start fresh.”

“Start... fresh...?”

“Ah... I suppose words are cheap, aren’t they? In that case...”

As I said that, I gently kissed Sasha on the forehead and then pulled away, a smile on my lips.

“...From now on, I intend to show you that I mean it.”

“Um... Um, um... I, ah...”

“What is it?”

“I... I too... Ah... I’ve always loved you dearly, my Lord...”

Sasha managed to say that, as a deep red blush spread across her cheeks. When I saw that, I made a vow.

From now on, I will shower this wife of mine in love. I will devote myself to this adorable woman so utterly that the relationship we had in the past would be nothing more than a bad memory.

I Got Mad, But I Don't Regret It.

After deciding that I would hold my wife Sasha dear from now on, the next place I had to visit was a certain someone's room... My daughter, Laurier's.

From the vague memories that were still filtering through about Callis' life, he never took much interest in his own daughter... She would have been two years old this year, quite young for a married couple of this age, but as I searched through my memories for just where her room was... This man, did he really care so little for her? I couldn't remember no matter how hard I tried.

The servants looked surprised as I passed by, even though they kept up their perfect etiquette... No, am I really that rare a character to see...?

"Oh? Then you are awake?"

"Mm? Zeke, is it?"

As I was deep in thought, an older man wearing the clothes of a butler called out to me... This was the house's head butler (or rather, the only butler), Zeke, who also looked slightly surprised to see me.

"I was on my way to visit your room... Callis-sama, may I ask where you are going?"

"I was thinking of visiting Laurier's room."

"...Oh? My apologies, I must have misheard? For a moment there, I thought I heard that you were planning on visiting the Young Miss' room..."

"I am. Her room was this way, wasn't it?"

Although the ever-calm butler had quite the rare puzzled look on his face, he still calmly nodded when I asked him that.

"Yes. It is in that direction. On another note, Callis-sama... I seem to recall that Sasha-sama was in your room earlier..."

"Hm? Ah, Sasha returned to her room. She wanted to come with me, but I told her this was something I needed to do alone."

"Callis-sama... I had heard you hit your head quite hard when you collapsed... are you sure you're quite alright?"

"You are quite the rude one, aren't you?"

Well, it's not like I don't understand where he's coming from. It would only make sense to worry about just what happened to a man who never showed any interest in his family acting like this so suddenly... But even if he has some doubts over my sanity, it's all I can do to speak calmly.

"I merely want to love what I didn't have eyes with which to see before. Is that so wrong?"

"Nothing of the sort! Your servant, Zeke, is in fact quite moved to see something like that awake in you, Callis-sama!"

To be moved so easily... Just how sad a life did you lead, Callis?

Well, I guess I'll have to fix his image from now on.

"In any case, I'll be returning to work after seeing Laurier, can you wait that long?"

"Yes... However, right now, Laurier-sama is currently taking her etiquette lessons."

"I see... Well, simply popping my head in the door shouldn't hurt."

"I would hope so...?"

There was something in Zeke's voice. But, well, for the time being, I'll ignore it and head towards Laurier's room.

"I think it was... here?"

But just as I was about to knock on the door... I heard an angry shout from within. I opened the door ever so gently, just a crack, and was greeted with the sight of a young girl who had fallen to the floor, with an older woman screaming at her with a fist raised in the air.

...Wait, that's my daughter Laurier... No, wait just a damned minute, what the hell is that old lady doing to the daughter of the house!?

I wanted to run in straight away, but I barely managed to suppress my instinct and listened to the old lady's words.

"You useless brat! How many times do I have to say it before it gets through your thick skull! You incompetent! You dunderhead!"

"I'm sorry... I'm sorry..."

"If the parents are good for nothings, then I suppose the child is too! You really are an unwanted brat!"

"Uu... I-I'm sorry..."

Snap. Ah, yeah, I think that was the sound of something breaking inside of me.

She called my daughter useless and unwanted... Alright, I've decided. I won't forgive you, you damned old hag!

When I opened the door, I paid Laurier a quick glance before turning my eyes to the hag.

"Oi... What do you think you're doing to the daughter of my house!?"

"F-father..."

Laurier seemed shocked just at the sight of me... but I had to ignore that for now, instead glaring at the hag in front of me.

"I'll ask you again... What do you think you're doing to my daughter?"

"...My my, if it isn't the Duke. I was merely educating your daughter about manners..."

"Then, why is Laurier on the floor? What do you call those marks on her skin?"

“T-that is... the young lady merely fell down.”

“So you’ll play dumb to the last? So be it... but just so you know, you’re being dismissed without pay.”

It was only at that line did the hag finally begin to panic a little.

“W-wait just a moment, please! Just this much is necessary for a proper educatio-!”

“Silence! My house is not so kind a home that it has a place to offer an incompetent such as yourself! Never again think to involve yourself with my household. Or else... Perhaps next time, I shall keep your head here?”

With those words, I motioned for a passing maid to escort her from the grounds... and whispered strict instructions that she not be allowed back on the property. With that sorted, I gently called out to Laurier, who was still sitting on the ground.

“Laurier... are you okay?”

“Father...”

As I drew nearer, I saw scars on her neck, painful reminders of what she had been going through until now. Seeing such a thing on the skin of a young girl, whose silver hair was just like her mothers... I cursed the wretched man Callis used to be.

“I’m so sorry Laurier... It’s all because of how careless I was that you had to go through so much pain until now...”

“F-father...?”

At first, Laurier could only muster surprise... but soon her body began to tremble slightly, and I could hear the tears bubbling up to her eyes in her shaking voice.

“I-I... When she said no one wanted me... I didn’t like it... But, I...”

“Such a thing isn’t true at all. I need you, Laurier. You are my precious daughter. That’s why, for everything up until now, I’m so sorry. From now on, I will give you all the love you deserve. I promise.”

“Ah...!? F-f.... ather... uuu...”

When I pulled her into a hug, she couldn’t hold it in anymore, as I felt the tears lightly drip onto my back.

As I hugged Laurier gently, I made the same vow as I had just before... I will devote myself to loving this child.

From Now On

After crying for a few minutes, Laurier eventually tired herself out and fell asleep in my arms. So, as gently as I could, I picked her up and carried her to her room.

(Hurting such a young child like this... That damned hag.)

I almost lost my cool... Just thinking about how useless Callis used to be was making me mad as well, but I managed to bite it back down.

But just looking at that sleeping face of hers made me think... Yeah, my daughter sure is cute! As I felt myself turn into a sloppy mess of a doting parent, I wondered just how much of a fool Callis must have been to have neglected his lovely wife and daughter.

I suppose I can't completely condemn the old Callis since I don't have any memories of him cheating, but... the way I see it, him not paying any attention to his family like he did doesn't make any sense.

Whilst that was on my mind, there was suddenly a light knocking on the door and a person entered... Looking up, I saw it was my wife, Sasha.

When I saw the worried look on her face, I gently raised a finger to my lips as I motioned my eyes towards the sleeping Laurier. As she quietly approached, her face twisted in anguish as she looked down at her daughter.

"All these bruises and sores... It's all because I didn't pay enough attention to this child..."

"It's not your fault alone, Sasha. The one most at fault here is me."

"...No. It was all because I was so childish about not being worthy enough in your eyes, my Lord, that eventually I began to neglect this child as well... I..."

Seeing Sasha gently brush a lock of the sleeping Laurier's hair off her face with tears in her eyes... I wrapped my hands around her waist from behind in a hug.

"It's not good to dwell on what happened in the past... From now on, the two of us will love this child with all that we have."

"...That's... right. I'm sorry, my Lord..."

"No... I too have a cross to bear for neglecting such an adorable wife and daughter for so long. That's why... from now on, I swear I will love the both of you to the utmost."

"That's... as a family...?"

There was something slightly uneasy in her tone... so, I responded as gently as I could.

"As a family, yes, but... Sasha, you'll be the only one who receives my love as a man."

"By that, you mean..."

"I mean, as my lover."

Sasha could barely speak as her voice was choked with tears.

“I too... With my lord... Always loved you...”

“...Yeah.”

I wanted to say something fitting, but... being the idiot that I am, I couldn't think of anything good on the spot, so it was all I could do to gently turn Sasha towards me.

Sasha's happy tears dripped down my front as she buried herself in my chest... she was so cute, I wondered just who the hell I was before now. How could there be a man in the world that would neglect such a lovely woman?

In other words... After I woke up anew, I fell in love with her at first sight.

“Please pardon my intrusion... Oh?”

After I held Sasha in my embrace for a time, Zeke quietly entered the room and stared at us, dumbfounded.

Suddenly noticing Zeke had entered the room, Sasha quickly separated herself from me... hmm. It did feel a little lonely all of a sudden, but being able to get a better view of how lovely she was wasn't a bad consolation prize.

“Zeke, was there something you needed?”

“Yes. I had something to discuss with you, Callis-sama, however... Am I interrupting?”

“Well, somewhat. In any case, let's hear what you have to say for now.”

Having said that, I gave Laurier's head one last stroke and told Sasha I would be back before leaving the room.

“Now then... what was it?”

“Yes... I wanted to discuss the matter of the governess charged with the young miss' etiquette training that you just dismissed, however...”

“...Did you know about just how violent her 'education' of Laurier was?”

“...Only to a certain extent. However, there wasn't much we could do, since it was the young miss' request.”

“Laurier's?”

When I looked at him dubiously, Zeke sighed slightly before he spoke.

“The young miss didn't want to be a burden the two of you, so she hid her tears and asked us not to tell... there wasn't much we could do, especially considering how...”

“Is that so... Laurier...”

I felt something in my eyes thinking about my gentle daughter... Managing to swallow it back, I asked the question on my mind.

“The other instructors, are they the same?”

“No... To the best of my knowledge, only the governess in charge of etiquette instruction was this way.”

“I see... At any rate, from now on, if you find out there are any similar pieces of garbage working in my household, you shall report it directly to me. As for the replacement instructor... don’t bother yourself, I will see to employing one myself.”

Callis was a Duke, after all. So long as I pulled the strings of my personal connections, such a thing should be easy.

When he saw that serious look on my face, Zeke seemed relieved as he nodded firmly.

“I understand completely... Also, in regards to tomorrow’s work, if it pleases you, Master, I shall see to it myself, so please feel free to spend your time at ease with the Madame and the young miss today.”

“...That’s a huge help.”

“Callis-sama seems to have finally opened his eyes. Therefore, it’s only natural that I, Zeke, do my utmost in order to serve you the best I can.”

As Zeke said that with a smile, I thanked him earnestly as I returned to those two.

Family Time

“Uuunnn... father? Mother?”

When Laurier’s eyes slowly flickered awake, she saw Sasha and I looking down on her.

Smiling as much as I could, I spoke to her.

“Good morning, Laurier. Are you feeling okay?”

“Mm...”

Laurier gazed up at us quietly. Since she isn’t fully awake yet, I’ll keep my voice as gentle as I can.

“Then that’s good... but for now, you should rest.”

“But, study...?”

“You can always do that tomorrow. Also, Laurier... if you ever have something you need to say from now on, you should always be able to tell me.”

“But... father and mother... are busy... I’d annoy you... teacher said...”

...I really should have mounted that old hag’s head on a spike. But, managing to grit my teeth and hide those feelings, I looked Laurier in the eyes.

“That’s not true at all. You are our one and only precious daughter... you could never be a nuisance to us. Therefore... from now on, you should rely on me. I’ll do anything for you.”

“I... don’t need...”

“But we need you, Laurier. We’re a family. Isn’t that right? Sasha?”

I looked over at Sasha, who finally seemed like she couldn’t hold herself back anymore as she pulled Laurier into a hug.

“I’m so sorry, Laurier... for not giving you the attention you deserve... but even if it might be too late now... But, I too... I need you...”

“Mother... really?”

“Yes. Because you’re my precious little girl...”

And with those words... I wonder if Laurier couldn’t hold it in anymore, as she clung to Sasha’s dress and tears rolled down her cheeks.

“Uuu... *hic*... Mother...!”

“I’m so sorry, Laurier... truly... I’m so sorry...”

Perhaps it was because they were both mother and daughter? Both in terms of figure and personality they come across as slightly awkward at first, but the two of them truly are very kind. Reaching out my hand, I gently caressed both of their heads until they stopped crying.

It's clear to me now... these two are both the type that wouldn't easily share their burdens. The type that would let all their woes fester inside them behind a pained smile... the type that needed someone to stand beside them in support more than anyone.

Of course, Sasha was my wife, and I could support her for the rest of my life, but one day, Laurier would walk her own path... as in, she would marry. It would make do to be sure that the person she ends up with can support her well... but, in the meantime, I should take advantage of being a Duke and Laurier only being two. Even if there are engagement talks, I could drag things out until I'm sure the suitor is right for her.

Actually, the thought of letting my cute daughter become someone else's bride is... of course, it pains me as a father to let her go, but it would pain even more if I caused her to be unhappy by hanging onto her forever. Since I love Laurier with all my heart, I'd have to find Laurier a partner that she can truly be in love with as well...

"Now then... what do the two of you thinking about spending some time together tomorrow, just the three of us?"

As soon as they calmed down, I made a spur of the moment proposal. Of course, both of them nodded without refusing but... somehow, it looked like Laurier wanted to say something more.

"What's wrong, Laurier?"

"Um... you see... father, mother... I wanted to go to bed with you today... no good?"

"Of course you can."

I answered straight away. With such a cute girl giving us puppy dog eyes like that, of course, there was no way either of us could say no as Sasha nodded quickly.

Well, of course, time together as a couple was important too, but... even more important was spending as much quality time as we could with Laurier, to make up for how lonely she must have felt until now.

Ah, but... after a quick thought, I leaned close to Sasha and whispered in her ear.

"Next time it will just be the two of us... I promise, okay?"

When I said that, a slight blush spread across Sasha's cheeks, but she nodded silently. Yeah... even in broad daylight, my sense of reason might be at risk if Laurier wasn't here, huh? It really would be bad to develop a hobby of getting a bit too lovey-dovey as a couple in front of my daughter, after all.

And so, just like that and from that day forward, the three of us started anew as a family.

Worst Case Scenario

“Hmm...”

As I shuffled the paperwork on my desk, I was lost in thought.

I’ve been working nonstop today... but thanks to that, even though I spent the last few days with Sasha and Laurier, I’ve managed to catch up a little bit.

I just can’t place it, but... I feel like there’s something just on the tip of my tongue every time I see Laurier’s face.

“Laurier... Laurier Fall...”

If someone saw me muttering my daughter’s name whilst my nose was buried in documents, they’d be rightly disturbed, but... there’s no one around, so who cares.

“Laurier Fall, the Duke’s daughter... Hm?”

When I thought of her as an aristocrat, a thought whirled to life inside my head.

The aristocracy, huh...? Even though what remained of my memory as a person from Japan intermingled with my memories of my current life, just thinking about noble titles shouldn’t bother me like that... No, wait a minute...

“Laurier Fall... I know that name...”

Of course, it was only natural that a father would know his own daughter’s name... but, somehow, I felt like that name was being drawn from my previous life, one without fiefs and nobles.

That’s right... and it gave me a bad feeling. Like I was standing at the edge of the abyss, peering down into the darkness – that kind of sensation.

Yet, despite that... I couldn’t leave things half finished, so I thought even harder, throwing that disturbing thread of memory weaving its way through my mind, and finally...

“No... no, that shouldn’t be possible...”

But, it was. I had finally arrived at the answer.

I felt my throat run dry and a cold sweat break on my forehead as I croaked out the answer with a rasping voice.

“The villainess, Laurier...”

In a different world during my previous life in a land called Japan, there were games that portrayed a romance. One of the specific genres of these games were ones aimed at young women... And for some reason, I still had a vivid memory of one of them from my past life: **【Pure Love Princess ~ You and Lovey Dovey ~】**, a game where the heroine squared off against a rival in love... The name of that rival, the one who went to great lengths to tear apart the heroine and the man she pursued, was the villainess Laurier Fall.

“This... this can’t be a coincidence, can it...?”

And what happens to that villainess when the heroine successfully managed to avoid the bad end... perhaps such a thing could happen in this world as well. In the first place, it was strange enough that the only vivid memory I had of my previous life was about this game, I don't think I'm wrong in thinking that this world and the world of the game are the same.

But, if that's true...

"Laurier? A villainess...?"

It was impossible to imagine that cute girl who easily rivaled any angel could ever become a villain of any sort, but... I couldn't afford to let my guard down. It would be best to use the full extent of my power and influence to remove any dangerous elements.

"Remember... That's right, in the story..."

The story was quite a trite one, a story where a common girl and a man from high society fall in love despite their stations in life... if Laurier was truly the villainess, then there should also be the protagonist character as well as one of the main capture targets, the Prince. Another one would be Laurier's adoptive brother... but for the time being, there's no such adoptive child in my family, so I can shelve that problem.

Then, the main problem, for now, should be the Prince's route... but so far, I haven't received any word of an engagement proposal. Certainly, there was a Prince around my Laurier's age... but there are Ducal houses other than my own, so I shouldn't consider a proposal set in stone.

The only way it could truly develop into a major problem would be...

"If Laurier fell in love with the Prince..."

That was one situation I couldn't plan for. Whether or not Laurier would fall in love with someone neither I nor she had met yet... Certainly, in the game, Laurier develops an unrequited love for the Prince and cattily harasses the Heroine out of sheer jealousy – but instead of winning his heart, it only drives him further away from her, and if the Heroine avoids the bad end, near the finale all of Laurier's evil deeds are thrown back in her face in the public eye... It's all very generic for a Prince route.

Although it wasn't detailed in the main story... in the extra materials that for some reason I remember having read, after her downfall Laurier is cast out of her house and lives on the streets, eventually being assaulted by men in a back alley and losing her life as part of her terrible fate... Though, I'm sure that even if Laurier did something terrible, I would never banish her from my home like that.

But, well... when I think about it more, Laurier wasn't really so evil, was she? It's only human to lash out in anger and jealousy if someone tried to steal away your beloved fiancée. Well, maybe she overdid things in a few places, but... some of the blame has to lie with that indecisive Prince, I feel.

What are you doing fooling around with other women when you have a fiancée? Well, if he really is such a fool of a Prince, then I won't have any qualms about not letting him even catch a single glimpse of my darling daughter, I've decided.

But, if by any chance, Laurier really did fall in love with the Prince... then, I suppose there's no helping it. I'd keep a close eye on their relationship, and if that Prince really did fall in love with the

Heroine, at the very least I could be there to advise Laurier to nip the engagement in the bud...? Gah, anyways!

“I... I swear, Laurier... I will never let my cute little girl die like that.”

That’s right... So, there’s but one thing I can do. Along with Sasha, I’ll give Laurier all of my love, and hopefully, she can fall in love normally and live a happy life... Of course, I won’t neglect my wife, I’ll make sure that my heart is big enough to dote on both of them heavily.

With that settled, I managed to calm down a little bit. Yeah, there’s no need to overthink it... so long as she doesn’t have to play a part in that trite story, then Laurier will be safe. Naturally, just because I know about the story, wouldn’t mean I was suddenly going to neglect reality... Right now, I would make sure that this wouldn’t get in the way of the new life as a family we were going to live together.

Sasha Fall's Happiness

Even a political marriage was fine.

In the eyes of Sasha Fall, the important thing was to be connected with someone. Yet her husband, Callis Fall, seemed to always be avoiding everyone.

No... to be more precise, wasn't it only Sasha that he avoided? Ever since they were first engaged, Callis seemed to be uncomfortable even being around Sasha. He may not have wanted much to do with her but, compared to her always enraged parents, Sasha preferred Callis' coldness to the company of her own family or the 'friends' only interested in her position.

She knew that she would never be rewarded for that preference. Callis would never truly look Sasha's way. But all the same, she did her best to stay by his side, as a Duchess should.

Yet even after having a daughter, the anxiety in her heart didn't go away... in the end, she grew distant to her child, in the same way she had distanced herself to those parents she so disliked.

But, two years after her daughter was born, something changed.

After a particularly busy day of work, Callis collapsed, striking his head on the floor.

She was desperately worried and, even though she knew that he would find her being near him a nuisance, decided to watch over the sleeping Callis, staying by his bedside.

When he awoke, it was as if something indispensable to his character had been lost in the fall... no, rather, just by the way he smiled at Sasha, it really was as if his whole personality had changed.

Of course, she was confused at first... she even worried if he had become strange after hitting his head. However...

"Sasha..."

Sasha had felt like she could lose herself to those eyes that looked at her so gently.

And like that, Callis had told Sasha that he loved her. To be told something like that after such a long time, she was speechless. But, all the same... hearing that made her happier than she had ever been.

What had really happened to Callis... she did not know. But, somehow, even if his personality had changed somewhat, she still loved him all the same.

Even if he may seem like another person... this was the first time that she had ever heard him say he loved her.

Making Sweets

“Alright... will that do it?”

After I finished up my work for the day early, I borrowed the manor’s kitchen to try and bake some cookies. This is my third attempt, since I’ve been struggling with the lack of quality ingredients in this world... but even if there’s still a long way to go before I’m fully satisfied, I’m fairly confident that at least some of the cookies in this batch were delicious.

Hm? Why am I baking sweets like this? Obviously, so that I can treat my beloved wife and daughter to something delicious. Of course, if you compared them with the cookies from my previous world, anyone would think that they don’t quite measure up, but... After all, considering the level of scientific advancement here, the ingredients needed to create those flavours likely don’t even exist.

My first priority was to try to make them look as cute as possible, but... when I thought about a severe looking father like myself trying to do cute little frosting designs on cookies, something in my heart ached... Even so, I’ll have to overcome this pain for the sake of the ones I love, a trial like this is nothing.

“Oh... Callis-sama? Are they done?”

Garrick, the head chef of the house, peeked over my shoulder curiously.

“Yes, for the time being, at least.”

“Is that so...? At any rate, Callis-sama, since when have you taken up cooking?”

“Mm... Well, not too long ago. Can I ask you to taste test for me?”

“Of course.”

I could hardly say that I knew how to do it from my memories of a previous life, but Garrick seemed pleased I was asking him to test my creations all the same. I felt a little bad about lying to him like that, but I pushed those thoughts out of my mind as Garrick took a bite... and then froze, his face deadly serious.

“Garrick?”

“...Callis-sama. Could you please teach me the recipe you used for this?”

“I don’t mind, but... could you tell me how they tasted first?”

After feeling like there’d be a ghastly reckoning should I refuse Garrick here, I steeled my expression and asked him.

“They’re, well... they’re incredibly delicious. Honestly, just what means did you use to make something so unbelievably tasteful?”

“Well... love, I suppose?”

I couldn’t say I was just following a simple recipe from my past life, but somehow Garrick seemed convinced with my answer.

“I see... so after all, the reason really is because of how close you have been with your lady wife recently, Callis-sama?”

“Haha... well, I guess?”

I felt the beginnings of a cold sweat on my brow... but, it's not as if he's wrong.

Recently, the atmosphere in the Fall household has been completely different. Up until now, the relationship between the Lord of the house Callis, his wife Duchess Sasha and his daughter, Laurier, had seemed frigid and forlorn, and that heavy atmosphere had an effect on the atmosphere of the house... but now that Callis' personality had changed to mine, our relationship has changed and it feels as if everyone in the household is walking around with a massive weight off their shoulders.

Well, of course, the reason is just that I began to truly treat those two like family compare to before, but... in the beginning, I have to say the stupefied faces of the servants as they watched my change in behaviour was pretty funny to see.

Eventually I got used to it... however, it seems like lately the amount of servants that are smiling at me as I pass by is growing.

“That's right... There's another dish I wanted to try cooking, but... can I ask for your help?”

“Of course you can! Then, you can tell me the recipe for those cookies later.”

“Yeah... but for the time being, I'd like to invite those two to have tea with me, so I'll be back later.”

With that, I left the kitchen.

Along with Garrick, there should be a lot more opportunities to collaborate and try and work on cuisine I remember from my previous world, but... at that time, my wife and daughter were the only two people on my mind.

Concerning my Criminally Cute Wife

“My deepest apologies... the young miss is currently at her dance class...”

Asking one of Laurier’s maids about her whereabouts, that was the answer I got. Well, learning to dance is important for noble girls... I suppose there’s no helping it?

“I understand. Then, she should be free this afternoon?”

“Yes. Once her dance class is over for the day...”

“Then, please tell Laurier that once her class is over that she should come to the courtyard. I’d like to take tea with my wife and daughter.”

“Right away! I’m sure that the young miss will be delighted!”

The maid’s face lit up happily... Mm, I’m happy that Laurier has such an earnest lady in waiting to rely upon.

After firing that old hag who was in charge of Laurier’s etiquette training, I made a concerted effort to make sure that there were no other such people around Laurier or Sasha... in that way, it seems to me that their personal servants now were both talented and also had high opinions of their masters.

“Is that so... please keep taking care of Laurier from now on.”

As I said that, Laurier’s maid bowed her head and I left to look for Sasha.

“Sasha-sama is currently practicing embroidery in her room.”

Sasha’s own lady in waiting said that, so I quietly knocked on her door and entered Sasha’s room.

Sasha looked calmly engrossed in her embroidery as she sat in the sun, but... she had a serious expression on her face as she worked. Sasha’s erstwhile eyes, paired with her silver hair that shone as the light reflected off of it, left me transfixed by the spectacle for a while. Looking at her like this, Sasha truly was a beauty... it was like staring at a portrait painted by a master.

“...Sasha.”

After watching her in silence for a while, I finally called out to her... Sasha really must not have noticed me, as her shoulders jumped in surprise as she turned to look.

“M-my lord... I’m sorry. I was so focused that I didn’t notice you entering...”

“No, it was my fault for suddenly interrupting you, right? I was just so captivated looking at you that I couldn’t call out to you earlier.”

“C-captivated, that can’t...”

Sasha said that as she tried to hide her embarrassment... just what is it with my wife? She’s way too cute!

Approaching her, I smiled as I looked at the embroidery she held in her hand.

“It’s a really beautiful design, isn’t it?”

“Um... I was hoping to give it to you, my Lord... b-but that would be a bother to you, wouldn’t it?”

Hearing my wife say something that adorable... I couldn’t stop myself from resting my hand on Sasha’s head as she looked up at me in surprise.

“I’d be glad... If it’s a gift from Sasha, I’d be glad to receive anything. It’s a gift from my beloved wife, after all?”

“Hauu...”

Sasha’s face turned bright red at those words... it was hard to believe she was a thirty-year-old mother as my self-restraint was being strenuously tested.

Yeah, as cute as my wife is... I really have to question the sanity of the man Callis used to be for neglecting her all this time... Meanwhile, I was fighting an internal battle just to keep a cool head.

“B-but, in any case... what brings my Lord here?”

After praising how adorable Sasha was in my mind for a while, the words of Sasha herself managed to bring me back down to earth as I remembered the main subject.

“That’s right... I was hoping that the three of us could take tea together once Laurier was finished with her dance classes for the day... what do you think?”

As I said that, Sasha’s face lit up for just an instant... then she tried to hide it.

“Of course... I would be happy to...”

“I... I see? Then, once Laurier is finished, the three of us can spend some time together... would that be alright?”

“Yes... if it’s by your side...”

Even though she said that so happily, I meanwhile... had more turbulent feelings.

(...Just who is this angel!? She’s way too cute for her age!?)

I don’t think I’d be able to hold myself back tonight... honestly, at this rate, I do wonder if Laurier will have a new baby brother or sister before long... Yeah.

The Girl Power is Overpowering

“Father! Mother!”

“Laurier.”

As Sasha and I left her room to head to the courtyard, I thought that it might just be about time for Laurier to finish her class for the day... and speak of the devil, after we coincidentally ran into each other in the hallway, I tussled her hair.

“Good work with your studying. Are you all finished for the day?”

“Yes, father.”

“Is that so... Good girl.”

Ah, stroking her hair feels good... This really is what it means to be a father and daughter, isn't it? Feeling my face go slack in happiness as I kept rubbing Laurier's head, lost in her cuteness, suddenly a slightly sulky Sasha pinched my sleeve so I took my hand away.

“Laurier is your daughter. I'm not jealous... is not something I can say, but you can do that as much as you like later, so please restrain yourself for now.”

“...Okay.”

After a slightly bashful whisper in my ear, Sasha began to pet Laurier's head herself. Laurier, who looked ready to burst with happiness receiving her mother's love, and Sasha who smiled at her so gently... Yep! My wife and daughter really are the greatest!

Suppressing my doting instincts, I called out to them.

“For the time being... let's go and have some tea?”

With that, the two of them followed me to the courtyard to sit down.

The weather was fine out and there was barely any breeze at all... that said, I could feel my excitement rising as the two people I loved more than anything else were together with me in one place. As a maid arrived to set out tea and the cookies I had made earlier in front of them, I called out to those two.

“I tried my hand at baking some cookies... would you like to try some?”

The two of them looked at me in abject surprise... but it was Sasha who spoke first.

“My Lord... you made these?”

“That's right. I baked them for both of you... would you try some?”

Sasha still looked stunned, but nodded slowly... meanwhile, Laurier looked infatuated with the cookies that had been laid out in front of her.

“For Laurier, I tried to make them nice and sweet. For Sasha's sake, I tried to give them make them soft to eat as well, but...”

“My Lord, you would go so far for Laurier and myself...?”

Sasha still seemed surprised as her voice trailed off in embarrassment.

“...Well, um... I just thought that I’d like the two of you to eat something delicious. For that sake, it wasn’t too much trouble.”

“My Lord...”

“Thank you, father!”

Sasha, who looked like she was ready to burst into tears and Laurier, whose smile was as radiant as the sun... Just seeing the expressions on their faces made it feel like all my effort was totally worth it... but, still, I wanted to see them actually eat as well, so I encouraged them again.

“Well, for now at least... please feel free to try some.”

“Yes. Then, I’ll...”

The two of them bit into their cookies at the same time... then, they both turned to me with smiles at the same time.

“It’s delicious...”

“It’s so sweet! Tasty!”

“Is that so... I’m glad.”

I felt a wave of relief wash over me as I heard them say that. Like mother like daughter... as I watched Sasha and Laurier eat together so happily, I sipped my tea in satisfaction.

“My Lord, aren’t you going to have any?”

“Hm? Ah, just seeing you two eat is filling enough.”

Sasha blushed from ear to ear as I said that... as usual, I was overwhelmed by the urge to pamper my ludicrously adorable wife, but... since Laurier was here, I had to turn my mind to steel and endure for the time being.

It’ll be okay... I’m a perfect gentleman... What’s more, Sasha won’t be able to stand the shame if I did something in front of our daughter... but, still, just imagine if Sasha was maybe a little ashamed but didn’t actually hate it after all... No! Endure it!

Without knowing about my deep internal conflict, Laurier finished eating her cookie and then, as she took another one, thought about something and then held it out.

“Father... ahh.”

“Mfu...?” Just what kind of strange sound did I just make as Laurier offered a cookie to me... but, even though she was embarrassed, somehow it seemed like Sasha was inspired by her daughter, and also held out a cookie towards me with a trembling hand.

“M-my Lord... A... ahh...”

Critical hit. Both my wife and daughter trying to feed me like this... I've never been so happy since I've become Callis. No, honestly, now that I think about it, the Callis that ignored such an adorable wife and daughter really must not have been human. Yep, I've decided that.

Like that, our tea time passed peacefully. Laurier's innocent cuteness juxtaposed by Sasha's adorable brand of beauty... It was an utterly exquisite thing to behold, and needless to say, I secretly made a vow to myself that we would have regular tea parties like this from now on.

The Daughter of the House is the Cutest

“Father...”

“Don’t worry. Just make sure to be yourself.”

I gently soothed Laurier who looked up at me worriedly as we sat together. The carriage is still trundling along... It’s only a month until Laurier’s third birthday, so today will be her first meeting with other children of nobility.

Well, since she won’t have any formal meetings with nobility until she’s reached the age of five, I suppose you could call this a test run?

Today was the birthday of the country’s Second Princess, Serena-sama... a special occasion where only noble girls around Serena-sama’s age, as well as the heads of their households, were invited to attend.

Well, in addition to finding suitable friends for Serena-sama, at today’s gathering there’s also the ulterior motive of discussing potential matches with houses that happen to have sons of the right age, but... there’s not much point in talking about such adult circumstances with Laurier, so I tried to put her at ease.

“It wouldn’t be good to be too impolite around the Princess, but... well, so long as you remember what you’ve learned so far Laurier, I’m sure you’ll be alright.”

“But... For our family, I have to be c... curtseyish...?”

Even if she stumbled on them a bit, they definitely weren’t words I’d expect to hear from a child not even three years old... but, it was obvious she was tense, so I took Laurier’s hand in mine and gave it a tight little squeeze.

“You don’t need to worry at all. It would be great if you could make friends with Serena-sama, but if you don’t want to it’s okay just to greet her. Of course, helping the family is important, but... what’s more important is that you put yourself first, Laurier.”

“Myself...?”

“That’s right. The most important thing for me is to always have the kind and caring Laurier around.”

As I said that, it seemed like Laurier calmed down a little bit. Well, as a Duke, usually I’d be expected to demand a little more than that from one of my children for the sake of the house, but... when it comes to my family, my child’s happiness comes first.

Certainly, it would be useful in the future if she could get along with Princess Serena, but I don’t want to force Laurier to do anything she’s uncomfortable with. It’s true I don’t know much about Princess Serena, but... if she turns out to be some sort of horrible brat, I’d feel awful if Laurier had to accompany or even adjust herself to such a person.

Of course, in high society sometimes it’s necessary to exercise patience, but... it’s also only natural for a father to want to protect his daughter, especially when she’s so young.

As for furthering the power of the house, even if Laurier doesn’t get along with Princess Serena, that doesn’t bother me too much.

Well, it's merely the way of the world when it comes to the aristocracy to prioritize connections and potential alliances over personal feelings, but... I don't think it's too strange that I don't want to push Laurier into something she's not comfortable with.

Of course, I can't shelter her forever. Real world experience is necessary for her to grow up... but, I'm content to keep that to a minimum for now. Laurier has endured an awful lot of loneliness up until this point. So, from now on, it's necessary for me as a parent to protect Laurier until she can find someone who can truly support her.

"Laurier, because you're a smart and kind girl, you'll probably have to endure a lot... I just want you to know that you can always rely on me and your mother."

"But... Father and Mother are busy..."

"What kind of parents would we be if we couldn't make time for our child? To both Sasha and I, you are our dear and beloved daughter."

Saying that, I ruffled Laurier's hair... she giggled like I was tickling her, with a bright smile. When I saw that cute kitten like expression, it really did remind me of her mother, but as I looked at her, I felt a deep pain in my gut when I thought of her growing up and getting married one day. I know I've already become a soppy doting father, but I was still determined to take a hard line on the fact that only an excellent man that I personally approved of would be worthy to take my adorable daughter's hand.

"Anyways... Laurier, you really should just act like you always do. You shouldn't worry too much."

"Yes, father."

Did it work? Laurier still seemed a little down... Well, of course, she'd be nervous on a day like today, so I gave her hand another gentle squeeze.

"I'll definitely keep holding your hand when we get there, Laurier... so you'll be okay."

"Mm... father's hand... I'll be okay..."

"Unlike your mother's, it's quite an ugly hand, isn't it?"

When I said that, Laurier shook her head.

"Mother's hand is gentle... Father's hand is... warm..."

"I see...? Well, anyways, don't worry, since I won't let go."

"...Mm!"

She beamed at me like the sun... After all, as if I needed any more evidence, my daughter was an angel. That said, it was a desperate struggle to try and keep my face straight. Who would want to see a bitter looking man like me fuss over his daughter like that... besides, it may be vain, but I wanted to at least look like a cool father, for Laurier's sake.

Watching Over my Daughter

Several groups of parents and children had already arrived, so I decided to make rounds of greetings with those who held a rank of peerage close to my own.

In the aristocratic world, it was considered impudent for someone of a lower rank to talk to a noble from a higher station, and likewise there was a tacit understanding that they were to make themselves scarce before such nobles unless called upon first, but... honestly, I really hate that aspect of high society.

Of course, compared to other countries, the aristocracy here weren't quite as obsessive over these rules, but... all the same, it was important to keep up appearances, and honouring old traditions was a part of that.

Well, the part of me that lived as Duke Callis considers that all part and parcel with being nobility, but... as expected, when it comes to the part of me that was just a normal working man in another world, it still doesn't quite sit right.

For now, I'll just greet the other attendees who are also from Ducal houses. Even though Laurier was bashful, she managed to greet everyone properly... yep, my daughter really is the cutest after all! As I thought that, I did my best to keep a courteous smile on that face of mine, but before long the greetings and pleasantries ended as His Majesty the King and Princess Serena arrived, and everyone in attendance turned to stand at attention.

"Everyone, you have our gratitude for coming on such an auspicious day! Today is an important occasion... for it is the celebration of my daughter Serena's fifth birthday. Please enjoy yourselves to the utmost!"

And with a word from His Majesty, the party began in earnest.

And apparently, I was the first that His Majesty and Serena-sama deigned to meet...

"Duke Fall. I am most glad to see you here today."

"It has been some time, Your Majesty. Serena-sama... my sincerest congratulations."

I was *Duke Fall*, after all. It only made sense that I would be amongst the most important Lords of the realm, but... noticing how tense Laurier was, I laid my hand on her head and introduced her myself.

"This is my beloved daughter, Laurier."

"M-My name is L-L-Laurier F-F-Fall... T-thank you very much for the in... in... invitayshun..."

As I kept my round of applause for Laurier's efforts locked away in my heart as she curtsied elegantly, I turned back to look at His Majesty... who, for some reason, looked quite surprised.

"Is there something wrong, Your Majesty?"

"No... I was just somewhat taken aback by how kindly you looked at your daughter just now. Do excuse me for saying as much, but you never truly seemed like the type to pay much attention to your family."

It's a shame if even the King thinks that way... but, painful as it was, until relatively recently it was the truth, so it can't be helped. Smiling bitterly, I replied.

"If I were still the old me, then that would have been the truth, wouldn't it? However, I truly do hold my daughter very dear to me now."

"Well now...? At any rate, I would be most grateful if our daughters could get along. It's a pleasure to meet you, Miss Laurier."

"Y-yes..."

After saying that, His Majesty and Serena-sama moved along to greet the other noble attendees... but, before she left, Serena-sama approached Laurier with a smile.

"Sometime soon, let's have tea together, okay? Laurier."

"Y-yes... Serena-sama..."

Even though she was confused and bashful about the sudden friendly invitation, Laurier still managed to properly respond to the Princess. Then, after regarding me for a brief moment, Serena-sama smiled again before returning to His Majesty's side.

"Laurier, you did really well."

When those two finally left, I whispered some praise to Laurier, who still seemed stiff and nervous.

"I... did I do greetings properly?"

"Oh, yes, of course. When we get home, I'll make some more delicious sweets for you as a reward."

"...Mm!"

Laurier beamed happily at me... Yep, my daughter really does look best with a big smile!

Seeing the angelic Laurier, I was suddenly hit by the insatiable urge to pinch her cheeks or tussle her hair, but... I remembered just in time that I was still surrounded by nobles.

After that, nothing particularly momentous happened and the party went on without a hitch... but, was it just my imagination, or was Serena-sama constantly looking our way?

Well, I can deal with that later... for now, the only thing on my mind is what I could make for Laurier after we got home from this party. Of course, the worry was still somewhere in the back of my mind, but it was just nothing compared to my thoughts about Laurier.

A Sweet Reward

“We’re back.”

“Welcome home, my Lord, Laurier.”

After the party was over, it was none other than my beloved wife, Sasha, who greeted Laurier and I first as we returned to the mansion. Seeing my adorable wife, I felt my jaw almost slackened into a lopsided grin, but I managed to straighten it out into a gentlemanly smile just in the nick of time.

“As always, thank you for welcoming me back. Whenever I see you, Sasha, it’s as if the day’s fatigue is washed off my shoulders.”

“...I-it’s only natural, after all. It is my duty as my Lord’s wife.”

Even though Sasha tried to hide her embarrassment, she was obviously happy. My wife really is adorable after all! As I was thinking about that, I suddenly felt Laurier tug lightly on the sleeve of my suit.

“Father... um... that...”

“I know. When it comes to those sweets, could I ask you to wait just a little while?”

Laurier’s expression lit up as soon as I said that... she’s so cute, but the thought of one day having to walk this adorable girl down the aisle to some groom is still painful just to think about... And what’s more, what am I going to do when she goes through her rebellious phase?

Just thinking about that is...

“Sasha, I’m planning on making some sweets, but... if it’s alright with you, shall we all have tea together?”

“Already? Aren’t you tired, my Lord...?”

Sasha seemed anxious just from the way she spoke, so I tried to reassure her.

“For the sake of my adorable wife and daughter, this much is nothing. That’s because, to me, your smiles are the greatest reward, right?”

As Sasha’s face reddened and she swayed side to side on the spot, the only reason I wasn’t sweeping her off her feet and carrying her upstairs right there and then was due to the fact that Laurier was standing right next to me.

Endure... so long as I can endure until tonight, then... I tried to erase the wicked thoughts from my mind as Laurier innocently looked up at the devilish me like the purest of angels.

—

“Now then...”

After suppressing the evil that raged inside of me, I made my way to the kitchen. I need to make it quickly since those two are already relaxing together...

“For the time being, the thing I made the other day... should I try making that again?”

With the ingredients prepared, I immediately set about cooking.

That being said, it wasn't a particularly hard thing to make, all I had to do was whisk together the ingredients and place it in the oven.

Well, after making sure it's the right temperature... there's not really much point going into too much detail. If you were going to force me to voice any complaints, I wish I had slightly better ingredients, but... well, there's not much point in whinging, I'll just have to make do with what I have.

It may be a strange sight to see a fairly strict looking middle-aged man, and a Duke at that, making sweets, but if it's for the sake of my family, I would do anything.

I've made the kitchen into one of my regular haunts lately, so much so I'm beginning to get quite familiar with all the cooks, but... well, I'll always do my best to make delicious things if I can see their smiles.

"Oho...? Cooking immediately upon your return?"

"Zeke, huh?"

Just as I had wrapped up cooking with those two on my mind, the head butler Zeke suddenly entered the kitchen.

At first, Zeke was shocked when he saw me in the kitchen, but... how should I put it? Once he got used to me being here, I was a little disappointed by how nonchalantly he accepted it. Well, it's not as if shocking older gentlemen was a hobby of mine or anything, but... there was some boyish part of me that liked seeing people surprised, was that so wrong?

"I was hoping to have the opportunity to discuss something with you Callis-sama, but... would now be an inopportune time?"

"Ah, it's fine, all I have left to do now is the finishing touches... what's the matter?"

"The truth is, an invitation letter to a tea party just arrived... from Princess Serena."

"From Serena-sama?"

"Yes, I have it here."

Just like he said, there was no mistaking the imposing royal seal on that intricately decorated envelope... and as for the contents, without a doubt, it was inviting my Laurier to participate in a tea party at the royal palace. Hmm...

"What sort of response shall we give?"

"For the time being, I'll ask Laurier what she would like to do."

Of course, turning down a direct invitation from the Second Princess of the royal family would be difficult in of itself, but... if Laurier truly hated the thought of it, I was willing to exert every last drop of my influence in order to decline it. For the sake of my wife and daughter, I would do anything, after all!

Cakes and Invitations

“Sorry to keep you both waiting.”

The two of them stood up to greet me as I finally finished up in the kitchen.

“Father, all finished?”

“My apologies, my Lord. For always causing you so much trouble...”

Laurier was leaning forward with undisguised glee as Sasha lowered her head in apology. Placing my hand on Sasha’s head, I spoke softly.

“There’s absolutely nothing to apologize for. I did it because I like doing it, as well as for your sakes.”

“But...”

“Hmm, but, well... if you truly don’t believe what I say, then... perhaps I won’t let you sleep tonight as a punishment?”

Sasha clammed up, her face turning a brilliant shade of red. I wonder exactly which recent memory of ours is burning the brightest in her mind right now... but, well, with Sasha ‘reassured’, I turned to look at both her and Laurier.

“Well, it may be a bit late in the day, but... shall we have tea together?”

“Yes!”

“Ye... *esss...*”

Laurier piped up happily, whilst Sasha spoke through her hands as she tried to hide her bashful face. Pushing the secret devilish thoughts I had about what I might get up to with Sasha tonight to the back of my head, I brought my freshly made sweets to the table.

“Father, what’s this?”

“Cheesecake tarts... Well, I suppose you can just call them cakes?”

That’s right... today, I challenged the famous cheesecake tart. I knew the fairly simple recipe from my previous life, so the difficult part was substituting what I didn’t have in this world when it came to ingredients and tools. It would have been nice to have some smooth mozzarella, but... unfortunately, I had to make do with some harder cheese, but I think it worked out alright.

“Cheesy cake...? Cakes can be cheese?”

Laurier looked at me suspiciously. Well, in this world, I don’t think I’ve heard anyone ever mention sweets made with cheese, so I guess this reaction is normal... but, all the same, I took my seat in between the mystified looking Laurier and Sasha to begin divvying up the cakes.

I suppose they weren’t jumping straight at the food because they were waiting for me to begin eating first, but... I’m much more interested in seeing their reactions than actually eating myself.

“Well, please dig in.”

“Yep!”

“T-thank you very much...”

The crimson colour in Sasha’s face calmed down just a touch as she took a bite of the cake... and then, a smile bloomed across her face like a flower.

“Delicious...”

“Really yummy!”

“Is that so... I’m glad.”

What a relief. I took a bit just to make sure... yeah, it’s not bad. But even though I smiled, I realized I still had a long way to go to reach the highs of what I’d tasted in my old world.

“If I’m cooking for the two of you, I’m sure it’ll be delicious, after all.”

“Really?”

I looked at the puzzled Laurier for a moment, then turned and winked at Sasha who sat on my other side.

“Of course. They’re packed full of love for my lovely wife and daughter, after all?”

“Ah...!?”

“Mother? Your face is red, are you sick?”

“I-I’m fine. T-thank you, Laurier...”

Those words seemed to have scored a critical hit, as Sasha stared at me in astonishment for a moment and then quickly turned away. Yep... Sasha with a big smile is certainly cute, but a bashful Sasha is fine too! In fact, it’s great!

—

After that, our time together passed peacefully... but, suddenly remembering the invitation that Zeke handed to me, I turned to speak to Laurier.

“Laurier, the truth is that Serena-sama had a letter delivered, inviting you to attend a tea party... what would you like to do?”

“Serena-sama?”

“You attended her birthday celebrations today, did you not, Laurier? Have you already become so close to the Princess?”

Sasha looked truly surprised. Well, I too was surprised that Serena-sama was already approaching my Laurier like this, the very same day they had met, but... I decided to keep quiet about that.

“If you don’t want to go, I won’t force you, but... what would you like to do?”

“...I’ll go. I want to talk with Serena-sama too.”

“Is that so... then, it’s decided.”

If Laurier has made her mind up, then there’s nothing more for me to say... with a nod, I tussled Laurier’s hair.

“If you go there, make sure to have a good time.”

“Mm... um... Father... Father... can you go with me?”

“I don’t mind, but... why?”

When I asked that, Laurier beamed at me.

“Father’s sweets make everyone happy, so I want everyone to eat them too!”

...Oh, what an angel! An angel has descended from the heavens!! Struggling to keep my twitching smile from turning into a dopey grin, I spoke.

“Well, if you’re happy to have me along, I’ll do my best to make something delicious... however, it wouldn’t do to try and force Serena-sama to eat anything. If she declines to eat, simply bring them back home.”

“Don’t worry! Father’s sweets are really yummy!”

“...That’s true. My Lord’s cakes and sweets are exceptionally delicious, so I am sure that the Princess will also take to them kindly.”

The caring Sasha who sports a motherly smile and the cheerful Laurier... Ahhh, my wife and daughter are too damned cute! Desperately holding myself back from turning into a goopy doting mess, I did my best to smile elegantly at those two who looked up at me.

During the Tea Party

“Father, thank you for coming with me!”

“To only take you halfway there... are you sure you’ll be alright on your own?”

As we stepped out of the carriage, Laurier’s face lit up happily.

“Yep! Because I have the yummy sweets father made!”

“I see... Well, when you’re done we can go home together, so enjoy yourself.”

“Yep!”

I smiled at that angelic daughter of mine, but... how should I put it, children really do grow up fast, don’t they?

I’m glad to see Laurier so happy and confident, able to smile not just to put up a front but because she’s truly joyful, but... there’s a part of me that feels a little lonely, knowing that the more she grows, the sooner the day will come when she will leave the nest.

Well, that’s all part of becoming an adult of course, but... as a father, there’s still something deeply disturbing about the thought of having to one day give her hand to someone else as a bride. I’m probably going to become a seriously weepy mess at her wedding, won’t I? So, Sasha would have to comfort me... but, wait, wouldn’t that just begin the whole depressing cycle of raising a child only to become separated from them all over again...? Ah, but, well... Sasha’s too cute, so it can’t be helped!

As my mind wandered, we soon found ourselves in the castle’s interior. I’ll have to see off Laurier here, since I’ll take this opportunity to take care of some businesses I needed to see done in the palace and Laurier shouldn’t keep a Princess waiting.

“Then... take care of yourself today.”

“Yep! Father, do your best too!”

If it weren’t for her words, I’m not sure I would have been able to release Laurier’s hand.

Call me overprotective if you like, but... I have to make up for the lack of love that she received before now. And it’s not as if I don’t trust my daughter to be safe, but... Laurier is the type of girl who will smile even in a bad situation or she’s out of her depth, so it’s important to be careful.

But, with that, Laurier happily made her way towards the tea party with the sweets I made in her hands.

“Now then... let’s get this job over and done with.”

After seeing her off, I headed into the depths royal palace in order to polish off that errand of mine.

—

“Haa... Finally finished...”

It took a little less time than I thought it would to finish that business of mine, but... honestly, why is everyone so troublesome when it comes to nobility? Even if you can delegate certain tasks, they’re still such a pain...but, it’s not as if I have much say in the matter, so there’s not much use complaining.

“But, what should I do now...”

Whilst it’s good that I managed to finish off that business of mine quickly, I hardly want to disturb Laurier’s tea party if they’re still having fun... for the time being, I suppose I’ll stroll around the gardens?

With that decided, I made my way to the small royal gardens on the other side of the palace. Unlike the gorgeous gardens that bring the palace’s courtyard to life, these gardens were less often strolled by the ladies of the court... but, even though it was smaller, they were still impeccably cared for, so they were perfect to kill some time in.

“Hm?”

As I strolled through the garden, I caught a glimpse of something next to one of the flowerbeds... it was a small child, looking down at their feet. A blonde boy... I think? Either way, he looked to be the same age as Laurier, or perhaps a tiny bit older. It wouldn’t make sense for any ordinary child to be left alone in a place like this... perhaps he was some nobleman’s son? At any rate, I couldn’t just leave him be.

“Won’t your clothes get filthy if you play around here?”

When I said that, the child jumped with a start at my words, then quickly turned to look at me. That neatly featured young boy had tears in his eyes. For some reason, that face seemed familiar... was it just my imagination?

Clearly, the boy wasn’t in a good mood, and after peering at my face, he talked.

“...It’s fine. It doesn’t matter if anything happens to me... father has lots of good children, so I’m not important...”

“Hmm... Well, I’m not sure what happened, but... to your father, I’m sure you’re irreplaceable?”

“...What does that mean?”

Bending down, I spoke softly as I looked into the child’s eyes.

“Because, to their parents, children are treasures. No matter how many you may have, each and every child is precious.”

“...But, I... I can’t do anything... compared to my brother, I’m useless...”

“Why do you think that you have to be like your brother?”

“Eh...?”

I smiled as that young boy looked at me in surprise.

“It’s only natural that you’re not the same as your brother, since you’re different people, after all. You are yourself... so, you should find something that only you can do.”

“Only I can do...”

“You’re the only one who can find out what that is... but, from now on, you’ll go through a lot in life, and get plenty of experience.”

“...Can I really do it?”

I gently ruffled the boy’s hair with my hand.

“You’ll be fine. You have an excellent brother, don’t you? Then, I’m sure that in your own way, you can become just as great.”

With that, the boy’s face had a bit of colour return to it as he shot to his feet.

“I... I’ll do what I can! Thank you very much!”

“Right... please do your best, then. But, I’m out of time, so I’ll have to go now, okay?”

Just as I turned to leave, I suddenly heard a shout of “Ah, um...!” from behind me, so I turned around... after a moment spent fiddling his fingers, the boy finally managed to speak.

“M-may... may I ask for your name?”

“My name? Well... you can call me Callis.”

I wondered for a moment about what to say, but... I was still a little awkward about using my title, so I decided to leave him with just my name.

The last thing I remember seeing on that boy’s face before I left was a look of respect in those sparkling eyes of his, but at the time all I could think about was picking up Laurier, not realizing just how well I’d come to know that boy in the future... but, well, it can’t be helped.

The Princess Too...?

After my chat with the young boy in the royal palace's smaller garden, I made my way to the courtyard where Laurier was having her tea party. It was a fine day and the sun was shining, and in the courtyard, Princess Serena was having tea with several noble girls that she had invited.

Amongst them, one stood out was a girl with strikingly silver hair... I spotted my beloved daughter Laurier immediately, who was already a beauty despite her young age. Laurier seemed to be chatting happily with the other children, but... the moment she noticed me, she suddenly stood up and ran towards me.

"Fatheeeeer!"

"Oh, easy now..."

As I gently held Laurier, who ran full force into my arms, I spoke softly into her ear as I stroked her head.

"Is the tea party over?"

"Yes! Father's work too?"

"I finished early as well, I suppose? More importantly... did you have fun?"

"Yes!"

Laurier answered my question with a cheerful smile... Yeah, thank goodness. It seemed like she really enjoyed herself. As we had our moment as father and daughter, I heard footsteps approaching. When I looked to see who it was, I bowed deeply.

"Serena-sama. Thank you very much for extending an invitation to my daughter today."

Standing there was Serena, the girl who had invited Laurier to the palace and the Second Princess of the royal family. Serena seemed to find something amusing about my hugging Laurier.

"It's good to see you again, Duke Fall... For my part, I too enjoyed my time with Miss Laurier today."

As she said that, I felt a sense of relief, but also an unmistakable feeling of discomfort. Her speech and manners were just too elegant, was Serena really only a five-year-old girl?

"Is that so... I'm happy to hear that."

"Oh, and by the way... the sweets that Duke Fall made were truly delicious. Were they really made by you, Duke Fall?"

"They were, but... were they really to your liking?"

When she heard that, Serena nodded convincingly, flashing me a smile.

"I'm not flattering you, they really were very tasty... if it's not too much of a bother, could we meet again sometime?"

"Of course, whenever you wish."

“Then, next week I shall impose upon your hospitality, Duke Fall. I hope I can eat something so delicious again.”

...Was there a diplomatic way I could back out of what I had just said? But, realizing she had trapped me with my words and her status, I agreed with a grimace.

“Then, we shall be waiting warmly for you.”

“Yes, well then... Miss Laurier, I shall see you again next week?”

“Yes! For today, thank you. Serena-sama.”

As I smiled happily seeing my daughter talk to a Princess with perfect manners, Serena-sama took a step closer and whispered something in my ear so that only I could hear.

“Next week, I’d like to discuss things with you in detail, so please make some time for me... Duke Fall. Or rather... the Mister Traveler-From-Another-World who holds his memories.”

After saying that, Serena-sama turned and left... Just what was that? Had she seen through me?

“Father, are you feeling sick?”

As I looked after the Princess, my face running slightly pale, Laurier looked at me anxiously. No good, no good... If I make my daughter worry about me, I’m a failure as a father. Stiff upper lip!

“I’m fine. By the way, Laurier, did you get along with Serena-sama?”

“Yes! We talked lots!”

“Is that so... then, I’m glad.”

I was still perturbed about the words I’d heard just a few moments ago... but, for now, Laurier’s happiness was more important, so I pushed that doubt to the corner of my mind.

“She seems eager to join us at our home next week... just what exactly did the two of you talk about?”

“Huh? Um... About how friendly father is to mother? And about the sweets.”

...I see. Whilst I’m curious about just how Laurier sees the relationship between Sasha and myself, I’m actually a little afraid to ask... but, well, at any rate, Laurier and Serena seem to be getting along well.

“I see... well, in that case, I’ll make sure that the sweets for next time are even better.

“Really!? Yay!”

Laurier beamed happily at me... Yeah, I’m still worried about what Serena said, but this girl’s smile is the best medicine to put me at ease.

As I thought that, Laurier and I made our way home.

Laid-Back Wife Time

“The Princess shall be visiting us?”

Sasha looks surprised. Recently, I’ve been able to see Sasha with lots of different expressions, and I’ve come to the conclusion that she’s lovely no matter what kind of face she makes.

Of course, a smile is always best, however... that bashful face of hers had immense destructive power when it came to destroying my reasoning, and I feel like I haven’t even seen the true depths of Sasha’s abilities yet. As expected of my wife! Well... for now, the most important matter is...

“Laurier seems to be getting surprisingly close with Serena-sama.”

“Is that so...? Laurier is...”

I saw a glimmer of pride in Sasha’s eyes. Because I was the type to brag about my amazing daughter as well, I didn’t hold back.

“Well, it’s because Laurier is such a kind girl, like you. It’s only natural that your daughter would also be incredible, isn’t it?”

“That’s... I... I do not have such a pure heart like that child...”

“Don’t be silly. I’ve never known anyone kinder or more gentle minded than you.”

Sasha looked up at me with a sad expression as she shook her head.

“I am not kind at all... Because of my sullen childishness, I never truly saw that child for who she was. I think that child, who somehow decided to forgive me, is the one with a truly pure heart.”

“...That was my fault as well. I was far more of a failure as a parent to Laurier than you could ever have been. Don’t let it weigh on you so much.”

With those words, I brushed my hand against Sasha’s cheek.

“I really am full of regret that I neglected such a lovely wife and daughter in that way. Therefore... from now on, I’ll love you both twice as much to make up for it.”

“U-umm... my Lord? That is, um... as you said before, ah... not just as family, but... as a man you would... ah...?”

Sasha flitted her eyes back and forth between the floor and myself as she fidgeted... tightening my expression that almost fell into a lopsided grin, I barely managed to stay the gentleman as I beheld that insane cuteness.

“Of course, on my honour as a man, I swear to love you as only a husband can. Sasha, you are my beloved wife, after all?”

“I... I too... my Lord, I... I always loved you as well, even from before...”

“Yeah. I know. Therefore...”

Taking Sasha’s hand in mine, I took a knee in front of her, and placed a kiss on her hand like a knight would do before a Lady.

“I love you, my Princess.”

“Mmm...!?”

Sasha’s face turned completely red as I suddenly did that. It’s hard to believe just how innocent she was, considering she was already a mother, but... well, I sort of did this on a sudden whim, so even I’m feeling a little embarrassed at the silence now... the only reason I’m not retreating out of bashfulness myself is because I’m taking the opportunity to bask in Sasha’s cuteness.

Or, should I say... her reaction was so cute that I wish I could bring time forward a few hours, so that I could sweep her off her feet and carry her to our chambers.

Of course, flirting like this was fun as well, but... when I saw Sasha’s bright red face with tears at the corners of her eyes, I felt the urge to do a lot more nefarious things than just exchange honeyed words.

“My... my Lord...”

...Endure it! I don’t think Sasha would complain if I gobbled her up now, but I want to enjoy this kind of face for a little more! Besides, I’d lose all hope if Sasha hated me for being too demanding, so I have to endure!

Of course, I don’t think Sasha would ever hate me... she might look up at me with tears in her eyes, but that’s not hatred! Ah, wait! No good, no good! If I keep thinking like that, I’ll lose the last vestiges of my reasoning!

In other words, um... Excuse me, Miss Sasha!? Don’t you think that level of moe is criminal!? You could kill a man!

Whilst holding back the wolf, Sasha and I spent our time together in quiet happiness.

What happened that night, you ask? Well... my wife is only for me, so I can’t let you in on the juiciest of details, but... let’s just say that Sasha was cuter than ever.

It’s as if my wife is raising her cuteness stat each and every day...

The Princess' Ambush

"It's a pleasure to see you again, Duke Fall."

Serena, the Second Princess of the country, smiled elegantly at me. She was royalty and I was merely a noble so... in the interests of being courteous, I smiled back politely, not yet truly understanding her intentions.

"The pleasure is all mine, Serena-sama. I understand that you were here today to have a tea party with my Laurier, however... what brings you here?"

"Oh my? Isn't it boorish to question a Lady about why she wishes to visit upon a gentleman?"

"...You call yourself a Lady, but I don't know many ladies who enter a man's room without his consent?"

That's right, I was currently working at the desk in my own study. I don't typically allow others in here since there were a lot of documents sensitive to the running of my fief, but... even if she somehow slipped by all my household servants and guards to get here, I still felt that I had to protest somehow.

She brushed off my words with a laugh, though.

"And I even came all this way to see you... Well, so be it. The reason I'm here is simple. You have memories of a world other than this, do you not?"

"...The way you're phrasing that, it doesn't really sound like you're asking at this point?"

"I'm merely confirming. Consider what you've been doing... if anyone who knew of how you acted before suddenly learned about how good your relationship with your family was now after hitting your head, suspicions are bound to arise."

Well, I guess...

"If you're saying this, then does that mean you also have memories of a previous life?"

"Fufu... I don't mind a gentleman who isn't too tight-lipped. If you ever find yourself single, I wouldn't mind becoming your wife."

"That's absolutely impossible to even consider. My wife will always have one hundred percent of my love as a man, there's no room in my heart for anyone else."

I'd never want to see anyone other than Sasha. Actually, I wonder how cute Sasha's face would be if she were jealous... but, well, it was impossible for me in the first place to love a woman other than her. That's just how amazingly charming my wife is. As expected of my wife! Ah, not the time or the place. Calm down, calm down...

"And, so? I assume you didn't sneak past everyone to get here just to confirm things?"

"Fufu... Well, confirming was part of it. The father of the villainess with knowledge of a previous life... I've never heard of something like that before, and I can't help but find something that interesting of interest to me, no?"

"So you even know about the plot of the otome game...?"

She did call me the ‘father of the villainess’, after all. And taking into consideration her knowledge of the other world... there was only one conclusion I could reach.

As if convinced by something in my answer, she nodded and then posed me a question.

“I only considered the possibility, but... you also know about it, don’t you? I didn’t think men were interested in those kinds of games, but... by any chance, were you a girl in your previous life?”

“Sorry, but I am as pure a man as you’ll ever find. I don’t really understand myself why I remember the details of an otome game...”

“Fufu... you rotten boy...” [1]

“Wrong.”

I didn’t want *that particular title*, so as I immediately rejected it, she gave me a half smile.

“Well, I was only kidding... but, I see now. Since you know about the game, you must also know about Miss Laurier’s personality. From what I recall of the game, she was always arrogant and high-handed, even in her childhood.”

That... was probably because Laurier was left under the violent tutelage of that old hag, with parents who barely cared to see her face. That high handed attitude was probably only a front... I’m sure it was a mask that she would unknowingly wear, to protect herself when no one else would.

When I think about it that way, the game character known as Laurier becomes even more of a tragic figure... but make no mistake, my Laurier is and will continue to be an angel.

“Those sweets of yours we were served at the tea party were unlike anything you can find in this world... and Laurier also mentioned how you had completely changed like you were another person; a better person.”

Laurier... were you thinking about something like that? Papa is happy to hear it... Well, putting the tugging at my heartstrings aside...

“And so? Like I said, are you really just here to confirm that?”

“Yes. Well... It’s nice to see that you truly do seem to be in love with your wife and daughter... and also, I came to say thank you as well.”

“Thank you?”

When I stared at her, puzzled, she seemed stunned for a moment.

“You’re telling me you haven’t noticed yet?”

“Noticed...? I’m not sure what you mean...”

“About my younger brother.”

Younger brother...? The Princess’? So, a Prince? The only thing I could think of was...

“The boy that you talked to in the garden last week.”

“The garden... that blond boy?”

“Yes. My younger brother, the Second Prince, Celeu... and the main capture target from the game.”

[1] She literally calls him a Fudanshi, the male equivalent of a Fujoshi.

He Was a Prince...?

“Just now, what did you...?”

I couldn't hold back my surprise at Serena's words.

That blond boy in the gardens was the brother of the Princess? And the main capture target from the otome game? Seriously?

Well, I mean, I guess he did look familiar...

“I really was surprised when my little brother asked me to express his gratitude to you. I thought perhaps you had realized who he was and were trying to bring him onto your side early, but... you were perfectly oblivious in your meddling, weren't you?”

“I couldn't completely remember the Prince's face just like that... all I knew was that he had to be some sort of nobleman's son because he was in the castle... but, why exactly the gratitude?”

I tried to remember if I did anything particularly important as Serena smiled at me warmly.

“He's been talking about finding something that only he can do, thanks to what you told him. My brother has always felt burdened by the comparisons to his brother, the First Prince. That being said, were you really unaware of what you were doing for that boy?”

“No... Well, I mean, it's only the duty of elders to provide guidance to youngsters, isn't it?”

“Just how old are you, exactly...?”

Serena giggled at my words. That aside, that boy really was the capture target Prince... Well, I remember what he looks like when he's grown up, but it's not exactly as if I can be blamed for not recognizing him straight away as a young boy.

“At any rate, I only did the natural thing to do as an adult, I shouldn't be thanked for it. It's an adult's job to watch over children, right?”

“Fufu... You're making me like you more and more. How about it? Why not leave your wife and come along with me?”

“Haha, please don't joke around like that. I am a one woman man.”

“Oh my, is that so? What an appalling shame...”

Despite saying that, Serena didn't seem to be all that disappointed at all. Well, I understand that she's not being serious... but, just from the way she talks, it's easy to see that this girl was not a child in her previous life.

“Since our business is done here, you should return to my daughter. I'm sure neither of us would want to see Laurier worried, would we?”

“That's true... well, this isn't the matter I came to discuss, but can I ask you one last thing before I go?”

“Please do.”

“You... even though you know just how the plot of the otome game goes... you’re still going to protect the villainess?”

Serena’s eyes seemed so serious when she asked that question... but, I couldn’t help but laugh at something with such an obvious answer.

“What kind of father wouldn’t wish to protect the happiness of his daughter?”

“No matter what happens?”

“Well, I can’t pretend everything will be easy, but... at the very least, as a father, I will not stand to see my daughter fall into ruin. All I want is for my daughter to be happy, and fall in love with someone who will truly cherish her smile... well, it’s not as if I truly need a reason to watch over her, since we are family after all?”

Listening to that, Serena smiled, satisfied.

“I see... I understand now. Well then, I’m sorry for intruding today, but I do look forward to having a nice long chat again some time.”

“Yeah. I too hope that you will get along well with my daughter from now on.”

“Fufu... That’s a matter of course, since Miss Laurier is so adorable and kind. Ah, that’s right... next time, can you make some sweets for everyone in my family?”

“I don’t mind, however... if you have knowledge of Japan as well, can’t you make some yourself?”

Serena shook her head.

“Unfortunately, I don’t have any skill when it comes to that... just because I have this ‘cheat’ of knowledge doesn’t suddenly make me a good cook, although I do have some faith in my ability when it comes to sewing. How about this? In exchange, I’ll make something nice for your wife and Miss Laurier to wear?”

“Well... I suppose that’s fine. Don’t set your expectations too high, though. There’s only so much I can do with the ingredients and tools in this world.”

“The quality of what you made for our tea party last week would be more than enough. Well then, I leave it in your care.”

With those parting words, Serena finally left my room.

What a strange conversation that was... I don’t know much about fashion, so I’d probably be a poor judge of whatever clothes Serena ends up making, but if she’s relying on her knowledge from a previous life then I’m sure the quality will at least be decent.

If I can get good looking dresses for those two adorable people, then a few hours of baking would be a very small price to pay.

And, well... as for what we discussed, it doesn’t seem as if she or her brother will be causing any problems for my family any time soon, so it should be alright to leave it be for the time being.

As I got back to work, thoughts of Sasha and Laurier in elegant and fashionable matching dresses floated through my mind, and I grinned in a way that I'm sure would make any onlooker shiver at the sight, but... as a husband and father, smiling at happy thoughts like that was only a matter of course.

Flanked by Flowers

Even after I found out about Serena's memories of her previous life, it seemed like the relationship between Laurier and the Princess remained good. I was a little worried about just how many times they were having tea parties lately, but... Laurier told me herself that they had gotten so close that it's as if Serena was her older sister.

Well, as a father, I should be happy about my daughter making friends, and I was, but... considering just who that friend was, I couldn't afford to completely let my guard down.

"Ha...! Yah...!"

With those thoughts on my mind, I swung my sword over and over again. If you asked me why... I guess it was just because I had a sword to swing. Well, alright, it's nothing as philosophical as that, like saying a mountaineer only climbs because there are mountains to be scaled, the truth is I just wanted to move my body around a bit.

The nobles I rub shoulders with all consider themselves to be learned and cultured men... even if all that learning typically goes towards managing their lands or the nation's military instead of art or poetry... and I thought it might be a good idea to strengthen myself in case I ever find myself leading knights and men as well. Well, I don't really mind working in either a bookish or more physical capacity, but... my view could change quite a lot depending on the realities of this world. If there really is magic in this world, then that would complicate things, but... for now, all I can do is believe in the strength of my own hands.

Well, I guess there are certain elements of fantasy here and there, but... that isn't too important right now.

From what I understand, the nobility of this world is typically split between those nobles who are more studious and bookish, and those who have more involvement in military affairs.

Should I say they're about evenly split down the middle...? As an example, my family, the House of Fall, have been an exceptionally studious family all throughout the years, with many of the former heads of the house having been appointed Prime Minister by previous kings.

On the other hand, the families that favoured military prowess passed down their titles as knights and generals down the family line, forming the backbone of the kingdom's martial might.

That being said, it does make me wonder... despite coming from a family famed for their bookish intellect, just why was Callis someone who favoured the sword over the pen? Well, maybe that was just part of Callis' weird personality...? I didn't want to dig too deep in case I discovered something I'd rather have left unearthed, but going from my addled memories, Callis had been a member of this country's Order of Knights for some time.

I suppose it's all just muscle memory...? After inheriting the body of a man once famed amongst the Order as a 'Sword Demon', I didn't feel like I was doing too much discredit to that name as I swung his blade.

Well, at any rate, swinging a sword like this was a good way to get the blood pumping after a day of doing paperwork.

“Fuu...”

I must have swung that sword hundreds upon hundreds of times, but... my body didn't feel anywhere near as tired as I thought it'd be. The fact that I felt like I could do that all over again was a testament to Callis' specs, but... just looking from the outside, Callis was a handsome man, blessed with power, strength and a beautiful wife and daughter, so anyone must have thought his life was truly blissful, but... I suppose that just goes to show that not everyone derived happiness from the same things.

As I lowered my sword and regained my breath, I suddenly heard a small clapping sound from nearby ——— looking in that direction, I saw my beloved wife, Sasha and my dear daughter, Laurier, watching me from just a short distance away.

“You two were watching?”

“I heard from Zeke that my Lord was here, so...”

“I see...”

As I wiped the sweat off my brow, Laurier quickly dashed over to me and tugged on my sleeve... looking down, I saw her staring up at me, her eyes shining.

“Father, so cool!”

“Is that so? What did you think, Sasha?”

After tussling Laurier's hair, I looked over to Sasha, who still watched from a distance. Fidgeting on her own, she answered slowly.

“Um... I thought you looked wonderful...”

“Is that so... to tell you the truth, I really would like to hug the both of you right now, but as you can see I'm covered in sweat. Once I've washed up, would that be fine?”

Sasha nodded with modest decorum, but Laurier seemed disappointed.

“Father, hugging is no good?”

“I wouldn't say that, but... Laurier, you wouldn't want to touch your father when he's all sweaty, would you?”

“Not true! Father, can I hug... please?”

As those words slammed into me like a boulder, I scooped up Laurier in my arms and hugged her. I couldn't bear to betray my daughter's expectations... How should I put it, maybe it's because Laurier seems to be more attached to me recently, but lately I've been getting even more opportunities to spoil her like this?

As I held Laurier close and she nuzzled against my cheek, I suddenly noticed another slight tugging on my sleeve... Sasha struggled to get the words out as she stood awkwardly.

“I... Even if my Lord just finished exercising, I too... like Laurier... I...”

As I almost died in agony as Sasha looked up at me, desperately trying to voice what she wanted, I kept Laurier close to me with one arm and brought Sasha into a hug with my other.

“Will this be alright?”

“Um... if you like... you could do it more strongly...”

“Wow, father! So strong!”

A beautiful wife who smiled bashfully as I strengthened my hug around her waist, and an angelic daughter who laughed happily as I held her up on my shoulder with one arm... I’d challenge anyone who’d dare claim I wasn’t the happiest man in the world.

As I enjoyed the flowers that bloomed either side of me, I decided that I’d make afternoon exercise a more regular part of my schedule.

The Muscleheaded Grandmaster

There was no shortage of work for a nobleman. Well, I suppose if someone was just watching from afar, they'd think I spent all my time fawning over my wife and daughter, but... those are just brief moments of leisure that I'm able to eke out of my desperately busy days.

The truth is that I'd love to spend entire days spoiling those two, but such a thing was impossible for me. Usually I'd be able to bear it when working from home, but... due to circumstances beyond my control, I had to once more come to the royal palace in order to clarify certain things.

I wasn't too worried about home security, because I had gone out of my way to hire only the most skilled and loyal guards my money could buy to keep any potential pests away. Was it perhaps because of Callis' nature? In the past, there were definitely rough elements to the guards and servants employed by the household, but... anyone on the payroll who caused me even a hint of unease had been let go, and I had spared no expense whether in money or favours owed in order to populate the household with people I trusted.

Well, I felt a little bad about the sheer amount of work that put on Zeke's back because of all the dismissals and new arrivals, but... it can't be helped, considering Callis' past actions.

"Oh? If it isn't Duke Fall. When was the last time we met?"

As I walked through the corridors of the palace deep in thought, I suddenly heard a friendly voice call out from in front of me. A man around my age who must have been some sort of knight, considering he was decked out from the shoulders down in plate armour. I believe... this guy is...

"Ah, Viscount Grieze. It has been some time. Oh, rather, perhaps I should be calling you 'Grandmaster Grieze' now?"

"I'd very much like you to call me by that name if you were to re-join the order. How about it? I know you may have retired, but your martial renown is still legendary. I can promise you an excellent post, you know?"

The man who smiled warmly at me as he spoke was the Grandmaster of the Kingdom's Order of Knights, the force that served as the backbone of the country's military, though amongst the peerage his title was Viscount Grieze.

The previous Grandmaster had once been a Duke, however... a genius swordsman worked his way up to the chief position on the backs of his merits, despite being outranked... that man was Viscount Grieze.

I grimaced as I returned Grieze's words.

"I am flattered by your invitation, but don't you think my old bones have seen enough of fighting by now? What's more, I have been away from the military for quite some time now... I am sure that the knights would only consider me a nuisance."

"On the contrary, I think that the men would be delighted if you returned. To think, the valorous man once known as the 'Sword Demon' returning to our ranks? I am sure that it would be a great source of inspiration to the rookies... and the old hands would be pleased as well."

You're doing me too much credit... is what I'd like to say if I were merely talking about myself, but his evaluation probably wasn't too far off the mark if you looked at the man known as Callis objectively.

Because of the increased workload at the Fall ducal house, he had retired from the Order, but... especially after beginning to exercise a lot more with his body, I can understand just why Callis' prowess was thought so highly off, even amongst the other knights of the Order.

Well... that being said, I still had absolutely no intention of rejoining the Order. Because, if I add the workload of being a knight commander on top of what I've already got to do, then I wouldn't ever be able to find time to dote on those two! Such a dull life wouldn't even be worth living!

By the way, Callis used to be very active in his duty as a knight... well, in truth, it seemed Callis decided not to have a honeymoon with Sasha in order to spend more time at work, and eventually used his work as both a Knight and a Duke as a sort of shield to avoid having to spend much time at home... honestly, what a waste of time. If I'd ever worked for a company so bleak in my previous life that they wouldn't even let you take a honeymoon, I'd probably have fallen into depression. Well, since I want to spend as much time with those two as possible I'd like to avoid such a working life, so...

"Well, I'm doing my best to make time for my wife and daughter these days, so I'll have to decline."

When I said that, Grieze's expression froze on his face.

As I was wondering just what had happened, Grieze didn't even to hide the surprise in his eyes as he finally spoke.

"If you're saying something like that yourself... then I suppose the rumours really are true?"

"Rumours?"

"Yes... That recently, the Duke of Fall has an excellent relationship with his family... rather, that he seems so attached to his family that it's as if he's an entirely different person."

Callis... you neglected your family so much that you even gained a reputation for it amongst the other nobles, huh? I almost cried at the thought, but... suddenly, I noticed a small shadow behind Viscount Grieze's legs.

"Viscount Grieze, just what is that behind you...?"

"Hm? Ah, how rude of me. This is my son, Reuben Grieze. Reuben, why don't you introduce yourself?"

At those words, from out behind Viscount Grieze stepped a boy of maybe four or five years old, with red hair just like his father's... that boy who looked somewhat familiar greeted me with a trembling voice.

"I... I am... Reuben Grieze..."

The Unintentional Flag Crusher

After his timid greeting, that red haired boy... ducked straight back into Grieze's shadow. As Reuben did, Viscount Grieze heaved a sigh.

"Hey, Reuben. How many times have I told you that you should be bold when greeting someone for the first time?"

"B-but, father..."

"No buts! You are the heir to the House of Grieze, and eventually, you will be one of the shields that guard this land as a knight. You need to shape up."

...This seems like quite a poor mix of parent and child, doesn't it? A shy son and a spartan father... well, it's not really my place to intrude in the family affairs of others, but... I couldn't help but think of my own daughter as I watched, so I found myself speaking up.

"Please excuse my rudeness, it's not my intention to interrupt you, however... Viscount Grieze, don't you think you're being too harsh on your son?"

"Hm? But, my son is always so nervous. If he's going to one day inherit the House of Grieze, he needs to walk with his head held high..."

Hmm... Well, I don't want to tell another man how to raise his son, but...

"Even if your son isn't the boldest, you shouldn't force him to become someone that he's not. Not everyone can fit the same mould. Certainly, sometimes strict education may be what's required, but... you shouldn't seek to deny who your son is from the very beginning. Your son is not you. Your son is unique, there's only one of him in the entire world... so, I'd recommend talking with him a little more."

"Talking, you say...?"

"Yes. If you meet your son at his level and have an honest discussion... then, I'm sure that you will find a way forward that suits both of you."

As I saw Reuben peek from behind Viscount Grieze's legs, still looking slightly frightened by me, I spoke softly.

"Ah... Reuben, isn't it? My name is Callis Fall. The head of the House of Fall."

"Y-yes..."

Reuben trembled like a deer in the headlights. Did he think I was about to yell at him? Although when I reached my hand out to him, he shut his eyes tight, all I did was ruffle his hair.

"Eh...?"

"It's only natural to be nervous when meeting someone for the first time. But, you really do have an excellent father. You can always take pride in that."

"B-but... I... I'm no good with swords, like father is..."

“You’re far too young to decide whether or not you have talent in one thing or another. And if you don’t have talent... that doesn’t stop you from exerting effort.”

“Effort...?”

I smiled at Reuben, who looked up at me in confusion as he trembled.

“Do you like your father?”

“Um... yes...”

“Then, do you admire your father?”

“...Yes. Someday, just like father... I want to be... a knight...”

When Reuben said that, I noticed the flash of surprise that ran across Viscount Grieze’s face, but... I kept going without hesitating.

“Then, with your own strength, you should aim to become an even better knight than your father.”

“My own strength...?”

“The person you become will be based off all the things you see and experience in your life, but... to find your own strength and surpass your father, you’ll have to work hard. The only reason your father is hard on you is because he wants you to aspire to great things as well.”

“Great things...”

“Don’t feel too burdened by it. However... just know that your father loves and cherishes you. Never forget that.”

With that, something changed in Reuben’s face... instead of looking confused and worried at my words like he had just before, he suddenly managed to find a firm voice, even though he still trembled.

“I... I’ll do my best. It’s scary but... just like father... I want to be an awesome knight...!”

“Yep. Do your best.”

I gave the boy’s head a final last pat and returned my gaze back to Viscount Grieze... who was staring at me, utterly dumbfounded.

“My apologies for interfering like that. But, even if your son may be shy, he has a stout heart... I am sure that, in the future, he will become an even greater knight than you can imagine.”

“How surprising... to think that my son would say something like that...”

Viscount Grieze looked stunned. Well, I suppose this is common between parents and children who don’t communicate well with each other; when they truly hear what their children think, it’s far beyond what they expected. Parents like to think they know everything about their child, but... at the same time, sometimes it’s hard for parents to look past that and truly see their child for what they are.

“You should talk more with your son from now on. Now then, if you’ll excuse me, I need to finish up my work.”

“Y-yes...”

As I passed by the still shocked Viscount Grieze, I heard that shy voice from behind me cry out “U-Um... I...!” ——— when I turned around, I saw Reuben with a determined expression on his face.

“I... I’ll definitely be an awesome knight like father one day...!”

“Yeah, I look forward to seeing it.”

As the boy bowed to me, I gave Reuben a slight nod of my head before turning around and leaving once more. Did I get too involved again...? Well, it should be fine.

Getting Fired up for my Daughter's Birthday!

"The final battle starts tomorrow... I can't afford to let my guard down now!"

"Umm... excuse me, Callis-sama? Could you please keep your voice down in the kitchen?"

As I made an energetic pose with a manly shout, the head butler Zeke spoke out to me. Ah, come on, it's such an important day, how can you expect me to hold back...? Surely they can forgive even a middle-aged man like me getting a little excited when it comes to celebrating with his beloved family...? But, well, it wouldn't do to disturb the two people here with me who were vital to the mission, so I guess it can't be helped.

"But still... I really was surprised when Callis-sama suddenly said that he wanted to celebrate the young lady's birthday..."

"I suppose I haven't been able to do so in the past. But, well, isn't it only natural for me to want to celebrate my daughter's birthday?"

Hearing that, Zeke nodded with a small smile.

"Understood. But, please don't overexert yourself... I will be returning to work now."

"Ah, sure. I'm counting on you, Zeke."

After that, the butler left the kitchen. Well, I guess he came to check on me since I was being so noisy.

As for the reason I'm so passionately working in the kitchen... tomorrow is Laurier's birthday.

There wasn't any celebration for it last year, but now that Callis is a changed man, that would absolutely not fly this time.

"So... Callis-sama. About the dishes for tomorrow... are you sure that you don't want me to help with the cake at all?"

"Yeah. Besides, I'm confident that you'll do an excellent job if I leave you to focus on the other dishes, Garrick. I expect great things."

Garrick, who was listening to Zeke and I talk, nodded confidently.

"Of course! I'll be sure to put those exotic recipes of yours to good use, Callis-sama!"

"Yeah. I'm counting on you."

For the party, I'd given Garrick a collection of recipes from another world. Well, it's a special occasion being a birthday after all, but I guess just how well he'll actually be able to replicate these recipes with the limited variety of ingredients we have on hand will be a good test for him, as a chef.

Whilst he takes on the main dishes, I'll be in charge of the cake. It feels like my practice in making sweets had all been lead up to this seminal moment... I'm going to make my daughter's birthday as great as possible!

"Now then... when it comes to Laurier's cake... yeah, I think going really sweet would be best."

Since my girl has quite the sweet tooth, I think a cake topped with lots of fresh cream would be good. Only...

“If Sasha is going to have some as well, I shouldn’t make it too sweet...”

Laurier definitely didn’t inherit her sweet tooth from her mother, who doesn’t really love things that are overly sugary. Of course, I had to keep Laurier’s tastes in my mind first and foremost since it was her birthday after all, but... yeah, it’s really hard to come to a decision, since I want Sasha to eat something delicious as well.

“I remember Sasha mentioning that she liked more tart tastes recently... So, perhaps I should make Sasha a lemon cake and Laurier something sweeter?”

I’ve noticed Sasha has looked pale at times, lately. Well, it didn’t seem like anything too serious, but... still, it made me want to make her something to hopefully raise her spirits.

After laying out my ingredients on one of the kitchen counters, I got to experimenting at once. This was my first time trying to make a lemon cake, so I was a little nervous about how it would turn out, but... it ended up not looking half bad.

The problem was Laurier’s birthday cake... I just can’t get it as perfect as I wanted.

I have no shortage of ingredients so I can try as many times as I like, but...

“Something’s not right...”

It wasn’t as sweet as I wanted it to be. Usually, this would be the point to give up on perfection and make a compromise, but... my little girl deserves only the best. I’m not going to spare any effort.

“Callis-sama!”

Then, after several more failed prototypes, the moment I was finally relatively satisfied with the latest cake I made, a maid suddenly sprinted into the kitchen in a panic. I knew her face... that’s right, she was Sasha’s personal maid... I stopped applying frosting to the prototype cake and looking at the maid, who was desperately trying to catch her breath in a fluster.

“What’s the matter?”

“Sa... Sasha-sama...”

“What happened to Sasha?”

I suddenly felt an awful premonition in the form of a chill running down my back, and as I looked seriously at her, the maid uttered the words I dreaded.

“Sasha-sama has collapsed...”

I didn’t even hear the end of her sentence before dashing past her. Not caring about how people looked at me, I ran as fast as I could towards Sasha’s room.

I don't know what's happened, but... there was no way I could stay calm after hearing something had happened to Sasha.

“Sasha...!”

Please be alright... as I prayed, I kept running.

Thank You

“...My sincerest congratulations. Your wife is pregnant.”

That was what the doctor who I had sent for stood up and said to me after checking on Sasha's condition.

“...Pregnant?”

“Yes. Her poor health lately was likely due to that.”

Even Sasha looked surprised by the doctor's words. Then, after thanking the doctor and seeing him off, I gently pulled Sasha into an embrace.

“M-my Lord...?”

“I'm so glad... I'm so glad you're alright, Sasha...”

“My Lord... thank you...”

Sasha trembled slightly as I held her in my arms. Ever since I'd heard Sasha had collapsed, just how much fear had gripped me...? If something happened to Sasha, would I have even have been able to go on...? Well, of course, I still had to look after Laurier, so I don't think I could have let myself go before seeing the face of my grandchild, but... still, I was deathly worried.

So, for now, all I wanted to do was lose myself for a while in Sasha's warmth, running my fingers through her hair as she sat up in bed.

“Thank you, Sasha... Thanks to you, our family is growing even more...”

“T-that's... um... that's because you've been giving me so much of your love lately, my Lord...”

Sasha stammered out those words bashfully. Well, after Laurier went to bed, we had definitely gotten up to quite a few things in private... so, I suppose this would have had to happen eventually, but even I was surprised by just how quickly we had managed to make a little brother or sister for Laurier.

I suddenly felt like I had the vigour of a man about ten years younger... but, well, it's only natural for my passions as a man to be ignited if I have a wife this charming.

“Well, it's Sasha's fault for being too adorable, so I couldn't hold myself back.”

“Uuu... please don't tease me like that...”

Sasha hid her face behind her hands. I felt my heart skip a beat at such an adorable gesture, but... I had to endure, it would be dangerous to do anything so early in her pregnancy.

“B-but, well... I am sure that father and mother-in-law will be delighted to hear that they have another grandchild coming?”

“Well, I'm sure they'll be surprised, at least...”

Originally, Callis wasn't exactly one who paid much attention to Sasha, especially at night... or rather, I don't think Callis had much time for women in general? So, even if they were married, Callis had barely touched Sasha after their first night... the relationship between the two was so distant that, if it

weren't for the constant nagging of Callis' parents after their marriage had gone on for so long without a child, Laurier probably wouldn't have ever been born at all.

So, I'm sure they'd be surprised to hear that they had another grandchild on the way, considering Callis' personality, but, well, how do I say this... I'm a bit disgusted with my own reasons behind having another child... it was all because I was drowning in Sasha's cuteness... No! The Callis who completely disregarded Sasha is the weird one! I'm normal!

As I justified myself in my head, I stroked Sasha's cheek softly.

"Well, anyways... for Sasha and I to have another precious child together... I'm sure that it will be like a bond... and we'll become even closer now..."

"Bond...?"

Sasha looked confused at my words as I smiled at her.

"Yeah. Proof of just how deep the love between Sasha and myself is... something like that?"

"L-love..."

"Yeah, a bond of love. A precious child that will only strengthen the ties between us."

Sasha blushed furiously at my words... well, to be honest, I was pretty embarrassed by them myself, and I was the one saying them. But, I didn't let that show on my face as I kept going.

"This is the result of just how much we love each other, Sasha."

"M-my Lord... if you put it like that... it's embarrassing..."

Once again, Sasha was adorable. As that intense wave of cuteness washed over me, it was hard to imagine that she was only the better part of a year away from becoming a second-time mother.

Laurier's birthday preparations... so long as Sasha can get a good night's rest, I should be able to finish in time. So, until Laurier came to check on her mother as well, I gently exchanged all sorts of embarrassing lines with Sasha as she lay in bed.

After all, my wife is just too damn cute!

Place your bets on whether Laurier will have a baby brother or sister below. Anyone who guesses correctly will win a smug sense of self-satisfaction.

Laurier's Birthday

Today is Laurier's birthday. But, since Sasha is still unfortunately not feeling well, she's resting in her room. The truth is, I really do want to be by her side, but... I also can't afford to miss Laurier's birthday.

What's more, if I spend too much time with Sasha now, I might end up troubling her.

If my wolf switch is suddenly flicked on and I can't hold myself back, and something happens to the baby, I'd never be able to live with myself, so I'll have to endure. Stay strong, my sense of reason...! As I felt those dangerous thoughts flicker through my mind, I tried to suppress them as I waited for Laurier's classes for the day to end so we could celebrate her birthday. A party that I had been keeping the preparations for secret from her.

"Father...?"

After waiting for Laurier out in the hallway for a while, when she finally came out of her room with class finished, she looked at me confused as I smiled and beckoned her with my hand.

"This way, Laurier."

"Yep!"

As she beamed at me and obediently ran over to my side, I ruffled my hand through her hair.

"Ehehe..."

Laurier closed her eyes as she smiled. As I beheld that kitten like cuteness of hers, I barely managed to hold back the goofy grin that almost leapt to my face.

"Are today's classes over?"

"Yep! Father, works done?"

"I finished early today, since there's something I wanted to do with you, Laurier. Can you follow me?"

"Yep!"

If you answer me back so bright and honestly like that, it really is heartwarming, but... I can't help but worry she might get deceived by someone someday if she's so pure-hearted. Well, that being said, Laurier has a good head on her shoulders for someone her age, so she should be fine...

Once again, the uncomfortable feeling arose in my chest as the thought of giving her hand away to some other man someday flitted across my mind, but... well, so long as my daughter is happy, my feelings aren't worth a penny.

Hand in hand, I lead Laurier down the hallway. As we passed by, the servants turned and smiled at us... I was beginning to realize just how much the atmosphere in this house had changed as of late, as I walked Laurier towards the room that I had been preparing.

"Here we are."

"Father? This room?"

“Yeah. Can you open the door?”

As I said that, Laurier did her best to open the slightly heavy door with her small body, and as it creaked open inwards... her face suddenly lit up.

We'd decorated the room with everything we had, and across the wall, a big banner with the words **Happy 3rd Birthday, Laurier!** had been draped.

“Father... what's this?”

“It's just as you can see. I had this room prepared specially to celebrate your birthday, Laurier. The truth is, Sasha... your mother wanted to celebrate with you as well, Laurier, but she's not feeling too well right now, so we'll go and visit her later.”

“Birthday?”

Laurier looked confused. Well, especially since there wasn't any celebration last year, she probably didn't even remember the date, or even why we were celebrating it now... with a smile, I explained it to Laurier as simply as I could.

“A birthday is a day to celebrate someone we're glad was born... a day to say thank you. Today is the anniversary of the day that Laurier was born, so we're having a celebration.”

“Celebrayshun... because I was born, father and mother are happy?”

“Of course we are. Sasha and I are so thankful that you were born to us. We're so grateful to you for being our daughter, Laurier.”

As I pet her head again, a big smile returned to Laurier's face.

Of course, I wanted to pamper my cute daughter even more, but... it wouldn't do to just stand at the door like this, so I took Laurier's hand and lead her inside.

When Laurier saw her attendant maid and nanny in their casual clothes waiting for her inside, she looked at them in surprise. Well, since she'd only ever seen them in their work uniforms before, I guess that makes sense.

“Next year onwards, I'll make sure to invite all of Laurier's friends... especially if Princess Serena comes next year, I'll have to make it a very grand occasion, but this time I thought it would be nice to have a smaller party.”

“Mia, and Lele too, their clothes are different...”

“I asked both of them to wear their favourite clothes today. It's for Laurier's birthday, after all?”

After that, I turned to look at Laurier's maid, Mia, as well as her nanny Lele... and as I did, they both smiled at Laurier.

“It's an amazing honour to be able to celebrate the young miss' birthday like this! Congratulations, milady!”

“The young miss has already grown up so fast... Congratulations.”

The maid, Mia, spoke cheerfully with a bright voice. Her nanny, Lele, spoke like she was deeply moved.

After being caught a little off guard by her words, Laurier was stunned... then, after a moment, she returned their smile.

“Thank you!”

Both Mia and Lele’s faces seemed to turn to putty when faced with that angelic smile. Of course, no mere mortals can stand against my daughter’s smile when she gets serious. As expected of Laurier!

Saving the Cake for Later

Laurier's third birthday was a fairly low-key affair, just kept within the house. Well, even though I did want to make her first birthday party a big occasion, there might be problems if I didn't invite other noble families because of how high society works, but... Laurier was still smiling happily even though it was such a small party.

Meanwhile, I was just happy watching her... as she spoke with her nanny and laughed with her maid, then came running up to me with a plate of food that Garrick had made, a big smile on her face.

"Father! I'm really happy!"

"Is that so... I'm glad that you're enjoying yourself."

"Ehehe..." I ruffled Laurier's hair as she giggled, then she took some of the food off her plate with a fork and held it out towards me.

"Father, it's really yummy! Have some!"

"Ah... Of course, I'll have some."

Is there a father out there who could refuse his beloved daughter offering him food...? There isn't! I wasn't interested in proving to be an exception to the rule, so I obediently opened my mouth and let her feed me.

"Yeah, it really is very tasty. Maybe eating with Laurier just makes everything taste better?"

"Really? Eating with me makes it more yummiier, father?"

"Of course. There's no father in the world who wouldn't enjoy a meal with their cute daughter."

I couldn't help myself petting Laurier's head again as she smiled innocently.

"Eating with father makes it yummy too!"

C... cuuute! My daughter is really ultra cute!

I could barely manage to keep up a stiff grimace as I was faced with Laurier's smile. I'm pretty sure if I tried to do anything more, I'd lose control of my expressions.

"It'd be even yummiier if mother was here too..."

"Ah, when your mother wakes up later, I'm sure that we can bring some cake up to her room to eat together."

"Cake? Father made a cake...?"

"Of course I did. For Laurier and Sasha... Or rather, your mother, I worked extra hard to make them for the both of you, so look forward to it."

"Yep!"

Even though it's her birthday, she's still thinking about her mother as well with that slightly sad smile... She's such an angel! Archangel Laurier!

But... seeing Laurier express herself like this, I can't help but feel a little sad about it myself. Before now, Laurier was... she was a child who always endured everything without a word, no matter how lonely or sad she really was, at least until Callis' personality changed. Well, that's Callis' fault for neglecting her so much, but... even though it hasn't been that long, Laurier's able to express herself so freely now... as a parent, there's no greater happiness than this.

But, she is quite similar to her mother... in that, if she doesn't have anyone to stand beside her, she might go back to bottling those feelings back up inside, so in the future, Laurier will need someone who truly understands that... Ah, what to do?

I don't need to worry about Sasha, since I'll always be able to stay by her side as her husband no matter what, but... when it comes to my daughter Laurier's future, I can't help but wonder if I'll need to play a role when it comes to the person she ends up with. Call me overprotective if you like, but... as a parent, I want to do what I can.

Well, if during her teenage years she falls in love with someone and said 'I hate you, father!' when I tried to meddle, I don't know how I'd go on...

"Father? What's wrong?"

"Hm... Ah, no. It's nothing."

Laurier was staring up at me worriedly. Damn it, I can't think about things like that now. I must have accidentally had a serious look on my face. I didn't think that I'd get that upset just by the thought of my cute and kind daughter reaching her rebellious phase... I still have a long way to go as a father.

Well, maybe I'm over thinking things about her saying that she 'hates' me, but... one day, Laurier will leave my side.

I'd be lying if I said that didn't bother me, but... I can't let my daughter see that side of me.

I'll do anything for my daughter's happiness, after all. Of course, I'll do what I can myself, but... for Laurier to live a happy life, that relies on a certain someone as well. A noble prince riding on a valiant white steed to come and take Laurier's hand... maybe that's a bit too much of a fairy tale ending? Well, at any rate, I hope that Laurier can eventually find happiness with a wonderful person and a loving family, like I have.

"Laurier... no matter what happens, I'll always be your father."

"Father?"

Laurier looked confused, but... even so, I still smiled as I spoke to her.

"Therefore... Laurier, you should always make sure to do the things that you think will make you happy. No matter what, I'll always be on your side. Because, Laurier, you are both mine and Sasha's precious daughter."

"Father... yup!"

I don't know if she really understood what I meant, but Laurier still nodded obediently with a smile. Yeah... I still have a lot of things on my mind, but... for now, all I can do is watch over Laurier and let her grow.

Being overprotective or too meddlesome wouldn't do her any good, but... still, for my adorable daughter, I'll swear a vow to do anything in my power to let her find her own happiness.

Laurier Fall Thinks of Her Father

For Laurier Fall, until recently, the word ‘family’ was only understood as a frame within which she lived her life. She only knew that there were people who gave birth to her and then she was given to others to raise, and under no circumstances was she to bother them any more than that.

“Are you listening, Laurier-sama? You are the sole daughter of the Duke of Fall... and one day, because of that, you shall become this country’s Queen.”

She had heard words like that over and over again. She didn’t really understand what they meant, but somehow she knew that she had to try her best.

But, that being said, Laurier was still a child... even if she put in all her effort, there were still limits to what she could do.

No matter how much it hurt, no matter how lonely she was, she had to endure it day after day without end. After a while, Laurier came to accept that what was happening to her was only natural. This was simply how things were.

Despite being deprived of warmth, Laurier grew up quickly for a child her age. Although the rigours of the aristocracy were a harsh environment within which to bring up a child... she took to language at an earlier age than most children and did her best to learn all she could.

Though despite Laurier’s efforts, she was never praised by her teachers, being told that such a thing was only natural for a child of a Duke, as she was strictly driven on. The way in which she was treated was so severe that it could be considered abuse for someone her age, even in this sort of society, but... human beings are unique creatures in how they will learn to adapt themselves to even the most inhospitable of environments.

The governess who was in charge of her etiquette training was especially cruel, to the point where it seemed like she even began to enjoy abusing Laurier under the auspices of ‘teaching’. Of course, Laurier didn’t know anything about that... to her, the only thing she could think of was that she had done something to deserve it whenever she was beaten, and in thinking that she began to start hiding her feelings. Before long, she had become very good at that.

It was about half a year after Laurier turned two years old that her life reached a turning point... when she overheard two maids gossiping about how her father had collapsed. However, Laurier could count on one hand the times she had ever seen her father. She still worried a little bit about her always busy parents, but... it wasn’t as if those two would care whether she worried about them or not.

Therefore, as she obeyed the ‘teachings’ of her governess who had become even more sadistic over time... she was shocked at the person who suddenly burst through the door one day.

“Oi... What do you think you’re doing to the daughter of my house!?”

It was her father, who she had seen so few times it was a surprise in of itself that she remembered his face. After watching her father rage against the governess for striking Laurier, he suddenly turned to her with a desperately worried look on his face.

“Laurier... are you okay?”

It was the first time her father had truly faced her like this. His eyes were firmly on Laurier, his eyes opened wide in anxiety... and, somehow, it looked like he was desperately trying to hold back something within himself.

As she stared back at him, the only thing Laurier could wonder from the bottom of her heart was; why would he help me? But, as her father pulled Laurier into a firm embrace, he spoke again.

“I’m so sorry Laurier... It’s all because of how careless I was that you had to go through so much pain until now...”

As her father hugged her, he spoke such gentle words into her ear. Was it because of that sudden warmth? Laurier found the words tumbling out of her mouth on their own.

“I-I... When she said no one wanted me... I didn’t like it... But, I...”

“Such a thing isn’t true at all. I need you, Laurier. You are my precious daughter. That’s why, for everything up until now, I’m so sorry. From now on, I will give you all the love you deserve. I promise.”

“Ah...!? F-f... ather... uuu...”

Her father held her gently in his arms. For the first time since she could remember, Laurier felt something stir in that heart of hers that had grown cold. As warmth flooded through her chest, she worried that her heart would burst, but... Laurier was truly happy.

After that, she doesn’t remember exactly when she fell asleep, but when Laurier woke up her mother told her that she needed her as well... and she was really happy.

She didn’t know what had truly happened to her father, but... from that day on, Laurier thought that her father really was amazing.

A brave man who saved her when she was broken... her father was like a hero from the storybooks.

Perhaps her preferences started from that day on, where if Laurier was ever asked about what she looked for in a man, she would say ‘A kind and handsome man, like my father’, without minding the confused looks on her friends’ faces as she smiled.

It should go without saying that Laurier deeply loved her cool and caring father who, like a prince from the fairy tales, had saved her that day.

A Birthday with Family

“Now then... are you ready, Laurier?”

“Yes!”

After smiling back at my adorable daughter, who looked at me with a bubbly grin, I knocked on the door.

“Sasha, are you awake?”

“Yes...” As I heard that slightly weak voice from the other side of the door, I opened it up and entered.

“Are you feeling any better?”

“Yes... I’m feeling much better than in the morning.”

“Mother, are you okay?”

“Oh my, Laurier is here too? I’m sorry for making you worry like this. And... I had wanted to celebrate your birthday with you today as well, but...”

Sasha looked at Laurier remorsefully as we approached her bedside. But, Laurier just smiled at Sasha.

“Mother, you’re importanter, so please lie down and get better soon!”

“Fufu... Why, thank you. You truly are a kind child, Laurier.”

Sasha motherly stroked Laurier’s hair. Laurier looked like a happy kitten as her mother gently ran her hand over her head.

Meanwhile, as for me... I was in silent agony as I observed the scene.

Ahh, both mother and daughter are too cute! A combination of a pretty and innocent silver-haired girl with that gentle and serene mother who looked just like her... yep, heaven has nothing on this, since paradise on earth has already been made here, we’ve even got the angels... as I spoke, I desperately tried not to let the dopey feelings running through my head seep into my voice.

“Now then, Sasha. Have you regained your appetite?”

“Ah... if it isn’t anything too heavy...”

“I see... then, this should be just right.”

As I said that, I pulled up the box from my side that contained both Laurier and Sasha’s cakes and opened it.

“This is...”

“A lemon cake for Sasha. It’s an excellently tart tasting cake, with just a hint of sweetness as well. And for Laurier, a strawberry shortcake. If I may say so myself, since I made them for the both of you, I think they’re masterpieces.”

“Um... hasn’t the party already ended? Why this...?”

Sasha seemed puzzled as she looked between the cakes and myself. Well, she probably thought that we had already eaten our fill of cake at the party. That kind of response only makes sense, but... I kept going with a smile.

“Because it’s our precious Laurier’s birthday today? I thought that we should have the main event just be nice and quiet, with all three of us.”

“To do that for me is...”

“It’s isn’t just for Sasha’s sake, you know? Laurier was also thinking that she’d like to eat with her mother. Isn’t that right?”

Laurier beamed happily at my words.

“I want to eat with mother too!”

“...So she says. How about it?”

At that, a small but joyful smile finally came to Sasha’s face as she nodded.

“I understand... I’m grateful that the two of you were thinking about me like this.”

“Alright... then I’ll get everything ready, so just wait one moment.”

“Ready?”

Sasha once again looked confused. And for that mystified looking Sasha, I cut off a slice of lemon cake and held it out to her.

“Here we are. Sasha, say ‘ahhh’.”

“Eh... U-umm... my Lord...?”

“Come now. Please don’t hold back.”

“B-but...”

Sasha looked embarrassed and then turned her gaze towards Laurier slightly. Well, I can understand being ashamed about doing something like this in front of her daughter, but... unrelentingly, I kept going ‘Ahh, ahhh~’ until Sasha finally gave in, and accepted that bite of cake off the fork with as much elegance as she could muster.

“How is it?”

“It’s... it’s delicious.”

Sasha smiled bashfully. As I lost some of my reasoning watching such a cute reaction, I suddenly felt Laurier tugging on my sleeve.

“Father. Please feed me too.”

“Ah, of course, wait just a second.”

It wasn't as if I ever had the option of saying no, though. For the sake of my assertive and lovely daughter, I cut off a slightly smaller portion from Laurier's cake than I had for Sasha and then held it out to her.

"Okay, say 'ahh'."

"Ahh~"

Laurier made a cute sound as she munched contentedly on her cake. As I watched Laurier happily, I heard Sasha call me from her bed, in an ever so slightly sulky tone of voice.

"U-Um... my Lord. I too, um... one more time, please..."

"It would be my pleasure."

After that, we settled into a pattern of me feeding them one at a time, but... even though I couldn't get the image of feeding baby birds out of my mind, it was still an incredibly heart-melting scene.

Birthday Presents

After the cake was done, I spent a few hours happily relaxing with those two in Sasha's room, before I finally remembered what I needed to do next. After excusing myself, I soon returned with what I had to retrieve from my room.

"Laurier, here you are."

"Father, what's this?"

Laurier curiously eyed the rather large box that I held out to her, covered in easy to tear off wrapping. Watching her curiosity grow into intrigue as she realized the box wasn't as heavy as it looked when she took it, I encouraged her with a smile.

"Go ahead and open it."

"Okay..."

Although I did make it easy to unwrap, Laurier quietly unwrapped the box quicker and more deftly than I expected. And then, when she finally opened it up... a big smile spread across Laurier's face.

"Wow... cuteeee!"

Rather, Laurier, you're the cute one... but, I managed to keep that thought to myself.

"I asked a friend of mine to teach me how to make a stuffed toy, but... do you like it?"

"My Lord made this...?"

Sasha looked surprised. Well, it's not as if I don't understand why, though.

The alpaca soft toy that I made for Laurier, I had to seek out the help of an acquaintance of mine, *a certain Princess*, in order to learn how to make it properly. Well, I tried to amplify the cuter parts, so I'm not sure it really looks anything like a proper alpaca, but... I'm not so sure there even are alpacas in this world, or at the very least neither Sasha nor Laurier seemed to recognize it.

"It's Laurier's birthday, after all? I was hoping to make something memorable for you but... how is it?"

As I said that, Laurier finally looked up from the stuffed alpaca she'd been transfixed by and, as she hugged the toy to her chest, she smiled from the bottom of her heart with eyes full of sparkles.

"Thank you very much, father! I'll keep it forever!"

"...I see. Well, I'm glad you're happy."

I think it's pretty impressive how I'm managing to keep a straight face... since it felt like my heart stopped there for a moment.

Damn... that daughter of mine, her smile really is a lethal weapon! Laurier, you're seriously an angel!

Although I was busy fighting a small scale war in my mind in order to keep my reason afloat, at the very least it seemed like Laurier was happy with her gift. Honestly, if I do say so myself, I thought I did pretty well considering that was my first try... Since I'm an amateur, I was a little worried about how it would turn out, but I suppose the proof is in the pudding as I saw how happy Laurier looked.

To already be such a bundle of cuteness at her age... I'm terrified to think of how beautiful she'll be when she grows up. As expected of mine and Sasha's daughter!

As I thought about that, I noticed out of the corner of my eye that said Sasha looked ever so slightly sulky.

"Sasha, is something wrong?"

"...No. Nothing at all."

We both know that's not true. Well, maybe she's just a little bit jealous about Laurier receiving something and being left out of the fun... enjoying Sasha's reaction, I smiled and shuffled over closer to the bed, leaning up next to her.

"Sasha, can you close your eyes for a moment?"

"...? Ah, yes..."

Sasha closed her eyes gently. Moving lightly in front of that adorably honest wife of mine so that Laurier couldn't see what I was doing, I took out a hair ornament from my sleeve and placed it in Sasha's beautiful silver hair.

"My Lord, this is..."

"It isn't quite time for your birthday yet, but I just wanted to get my beloved wife something to say thank you for everything she does."

Sasha softly ran a hand over the hair decoration with an astonished look on her face... then, an embarrassed smile spread to her lips.

"T-thank you very much..."

...Ahh, too cute! Just what kind of destructive power does an embarrassed Sasha hold!? Just how can she be so adorable!? If Laurier weren't here, and she didn't have another child in her stomach, I swear she couldn't be a day over eighteen!

And in that way, I spent the rest of the day relaxing with my adorable wife and daughter... of course, I marked this down in my mind as one of the best days we'd spent all together as a family yet.

Yeah... After all, my wife and daughter are just too cute!

Advanced Notice

“What’s that? Father and mother are?”

Only a few days had passed since Laurier’s birthday party... as per usual, I was buried up to my neck in documents trying to get them all out of the way as quickly as possible to get to family time faster, when Zeke’s sudden report made me raise an eyebrow.

But Zeke didn’t seem to mind.

“Yes. Oscar-sama and Lishana-sama will be arriving soon.”

Callis’ father and the former Duke, Oscar Fall, as well as his wife, Lishana Fall. Those two should have been enjoying a quiet retirement out in the countryside, but...

“If they’re visiting now all of a sudden... it must be because of Sasha’s pregnancy?”

That was the only thing I could think of. But, I don’t exactly remember making that public knowledge at all. But, by process of elimination, I could only think of one person who would have told my parents about this.

“Zeke... are you sending reports to my father and mother?”

“I am merely answering their requests to hear about the wellbeing of Callis-sama and Sasha-sama.”

Zeke didn’t betray any remorse as he said that. Well, I guess that’s fine, but... why can’t I shake this worrying feeling?

Sasha and Laurier, as well as all the servants in the mansion, seem to have accepted my sudden shift in personality, but I couldn’t say the same for the parents that Callis hadn’t met in years.

The memories I have of Callis’ parents didn’t make me think they were bad people, but... perhaps because of Callis’ nature, I don’t think he had a particularly good relationship with his parents either.

What’s more, after Callis took over the running of the household, it took quite a lot of time before Laurier was finally born. One of the very few conversations I could recall with father, before Laurier arrived, had ended with the line ‘just when can I expect a grandchild?’

Callis had told his father that he was busy with his work both as the Duke and as a knight... well, he also said something about being ‘incompatible’ with Sasha in the bedroom, but... considering just what she and I get up to at night nowadays, it’s clear that was a barefaced lie.

Well, maybe Callis had his own circumstances or reasons, but... I have to say, the man had some impressive willpower to be able to ignore such an excellent wife like that for so long.

Or maybe, Callis just plain wasn’t interested in women... or rather, maybe he just wasn’t comfortable around them...? But, all the same, I just can’t understand leaving such an adorable wife like Sasha out in the cold for so long.

Well, I suppose I’m torn as well. On one hand, because Callis barely ever laid a finger on her, I can enjoy Sasha’s first-time reactions to a lot of *certain things* first hand, so I suppose I’m grateful in that

sense, but... I still couldn't help but feel frustrated that someone wouldn't appreciate just how wonderful she was for years like that.

Callis' parents seem to have understood to a degree that he wasn't exactly incredible when it came to dealing with women, but... since they were never able to have another child after Callis was born, it was only natural that they placed their hopes to one day see grandchildren in him.

Well, I suppose that's it then... now, what to do...?

"Zeke, how exactly do you think that father and mother would react, seeing me the way I am now?"

"If I may speak frankly, I believe they'll be moved to tears."

To move his parents to tears just because Callis finally paid some attention to his wife and daughter, just how sad of a life did he lead... swallowing down those feelings, I kept going.

"I understand... for now, can I ask you to help prepare for their arrival? I'll talk to Sasha and Laurier beforehand."

"At once."

And so, my parents suddenly decided to visit me out of the blue... now, honestly, what am I going to do?

Just a note from the last chapter; any misspellings/grammar mistakes in Laurier's speech are intentional.

Discussion Over Dinner

“Father-in-law and mother-in-law are coming?”

At dinner that night, I told both of them of my parents’ arrival, to which Sasha reacted with astonishment. Noting how cute that surprised expression of hers was, I went on.

“It’s probably because they’ve heard we’re expecting a second... Laurier, the last time you met them was after you were born, so you probably don’t remember, do you?”

“Father’s father?”

“...Yeah. That’s right. Well, you should call them ‘grandparents’, Laurier... they are your grandfather and grandmother.”

It took more willpower than I realized I had not to reach over the table and ruffle her hair as she nodded at me with a big smile. ‘Father’s father’, what kind of expression is that!? It’s too cute! But as my mind raced, I didn’t notice that Sasha looked slightly worried.

“I would like to help prepare for their arrival, but...”

“Sasha, you shouldn’t do anything that would put your body at risk. This is a really important time, after all?”

“My apologies...”

Sasha looked remorseful as she sat up in bed. I know it’s not exactly good manners, especially for a noble, but... until Sasha’s health had improved, I’d organized to have a low table brought up to her room so that we could still all enjoy having meals together. Well, of course, if Sasha wasn’t feeling well I’d just eat together in the dining room with Laurier, but... I want to be by Sasha’s side as much as I can without burdening her, and it seems like the servants in the mansion are kindly turning a blind eye to our little breach of etiquette.

I brought my self closer to Sasha’s bed and gently brushed my hand through her hair.

“You don’t have to work yourself up so much... is what I would like to say, but I know how hard you’re working for our new family member. So, I’ll do whatever I can for you, Sasha, as well as Laurier... and of course, our new child. It’s only natural to rely on your family when you need to, right?”

“But... I’m always causing you so much trouble, my Lord...”

Mmm... Sasha still looks pretty depressed about this. She even looks beautiful with a solemn expression like that, but... I really can’t afford to let her feel down, especially if she isn’t in the best of health. I gave Sasha my warmest smile as I responded.

“There’s no such thing as trouble when it comes to my dear wife and daughter. If it’s for the sake of my family, I’m willing to do anything after all, so this much is nothing.”

“But... if I’m always relying on you like this, my Lord, I’ll be a burden...”

If everything was normal, words like that would be enough to put Sasha at ease, but... probably because of the pregnancy, it seems like she's slightly more anxious than usual.

Well now, my daughter is sitting right there and Sasha is in the early stages of pregnancy, so I can't do anything too flashy... what to do...

'Let me embrace all your troubles away' is something I'd usually say, and whisk her away to my bed, but that's not something I could do even if Laurier wasn't here, because I don't want to put the baby or Sasha's health at risk.

If that's the case... then, I only have one option.

Cupping her cheek with my hand, I gently leaned in and kissed Sasha on the forehead.

"M-my Lord..."

She mustn't have expected me to do this in front of our daughter. That look of anxiety from just a few moments ago was blown away as Sasha's eyes opened wide, her cheeks flushing crimson. As Sasha sat speechlessly, I flashed her an ever so slightly mischievous grin.

"Sorry about that. But Sasha, it's your fault for being too cute, right...?"

"C-cute? That's..."

"You know... I really love your cute side, Sasha. No matter what, through thick and thin, I'll always love you, Sasha. That's why, if you say something as cute as that again... perhaps I'll have to seal those lips with a more adult kiss?"

Sasha had no more words as her entire face went red. As relieved as I was that Sasha seemed to finally be calming down a little bit, the moment I let my guard down I felt a soft tug on my sleeve, as I looked down to see Laurier staring up at me with confused eyes.

"Father... what's an adult kiss?"

...I slipped up. To think that the day has already come where my pure and innocent daughter would ask me such a thing...

Well, I suppose education is also part of a parent's job. Eventually, Sasha or I will have to teach her about things like this, but... unlike Sasha, who I could simply teach practically, that wasn't exactly something I could do with Laurier, so... after a bit of thought, I made up something safe on the spot, and thankfully she seemed to believe me.

Parents' Arrival

As I spent my time preparing for their arrival, it seemed like the day of their visit arrived in the blink of an eye. That being said, since it was only my parents visiting, it wasn't necessary to get too much pomp and circumstances cobbled together. The most important thing was that they are welcomed warmly to the home that used to be theirs.

Typically, after retiring and leaving their work to their heirs, nobles will find a comfy retreat out in the country... Well, that being said, this house is out in the country as well, but at any rate, the point is that I could hardly let them think that the home they used to live in has become any less warm and bright in their absence.

At any rate, the cleaning went off without a hitch because the servants do an excellent job lately, and there weren't any problems with the decorations either since it was all done according to Duchess Sasha's detailed instructions, and she has an excellent sense of style.

If Sasha was feeling well, I'd have asked her to receive my parents for me, but... since Sasha still wasn't healthy and putting any strain on her might cause her to feel depressed again, I decided to finish up my work early and waited for their arrival.

"Father? What are grandfather and grandmother like?"

As I waited for them whilst sipping a cup of tea, Laurier who had already finished her classes and was sitting with me asked me that.

What should I say... everything I could say about my parents in this world would just be what I could recall of Callis' memories.

"They are very virtuous and kind people."

"Kind... Like father is kind?"

Somehow, my adorable daughter seems to have me pegged in the 'kind' bracket. As a parent, I was so happy I could burst, but I did my best to keep my dignity as a father intact as I smiled gently, running a hand over Laurier's hair.

"Well... I don't know if you could call me kind, I'm an unsightly man who put the interests of the house before anyone else."

"Father is super kind!"

"Mm. Thank you, Laurier."

"Ehehe..." Laurier giggled as I tussled her hair again. Just as I thought... my daughter is too cute! Dangerously cute!

"Callis-sama. Oscar-sama and Lishana-sama have returned."

As I enjoyed my time talking with Laurier, Zeke came in to deliver a report with uncanny timing.

Indeed... Well, as much as I treasure quality time with my daughter, I can't keep those two waiting. Turning around, I held my hand out to Laurier.

“Now then... Laurier, shall we be off?”

“Yes!”

Laurier joyfully grasped the hand I held out to her with a big happy smile. It was a bit painful for a middle-aged man like me to stoop down to hold her hand, but... if that was the price to pay to squeeze in a bit more time being close with Laurier before meeting her grandparents, then it wasn't anything to complain about.

“It has been quite some time. Mother, father.”

I greeted the two of them in the entrance hall with a smile.

The older looking man with a slightly surprised look on his face... a man who looked almost like a mirror image of Callis, if he were aged about twenty years. No doubt that this man was Callis' father and the former Duke, Oscar Fall.

“It has been a while, Callis... but, I'm relieved to see you're looking so cheerful.”

And the woman beside him, whose warm expression of relief matched her words was Callis' mother and the former Duchess, Lishana Fall.

“Yes. I'm glad to see that both of you haven't changed either. And... Laurier, would you like to say hello?”

“Y-yes...”

Laurier, who was hiding behind my back, looked a little tense as she meekly stepped out from behind me.

“Grandfather, grandmother. Hello...”

“Laurier, huh...? It's been such a long time since we last met, only just after you were born... you sure have gotten bigger, haven't you?”

Mother smiled at Laurier kindly, as if they were already very close. As mother began to talk softly with Laurier, I called out to my father, who was still silent and stiff in surprise.

“Father, how have you been?”

“Callis... is that truly you?”

“Yes, but... is there something wrong?”

“No, it's just... I'm a little surprised by how much softer your expression has gotten since the last time I saw you.”

Well, I suppose I shouldn't be surprised that a man like Callis showed that stern expression of his even to his parents, but... I tried to answer as naturally as I could.

“Having a family can change a man. Did you experience something like this as well, father?”

“Is... that so...?”

Of course, it would be hard to swallow the fact that his son’s personality had changed so suddenly, but I don’t think I said anything particularly wrong in my reply, so there shouldn’t be a problem.

And so, in that way, father rubbed his temples in slight disbelief whilst mother spoke to the still nervous Laurier with a smile. Although the couple seemed to have managed so far, they had no idea that the surprises would just keep on rolling in one after the other after this.

...Well, it’ll be about 90% my fault, though.

A Stunning Scene

I'd wanted to bring them to the parlour to have a rest with some tea after their trip, but I couldn't refuse mother's request to see Sasha, so I took the two of them up to her room.

"Is that so... then, you've already learned how to dance, Laurier?"

"Yes!"

"Isn't that amazing? As expected of my granddaughter."

On the way, Laurier and her grandmother seemed to be getting along well. Or rather, it seemed as if my mother warmed up to Laurier straight away. I could only remember mother showing that kind of expression before in Callis' memories, and even then only a few times. It seems as if mother has a big soft spot for children.

Yeah, well... it only makes sense, considering my how my daughter is the spitting image of my lovely wife Sasha, she has an irresistible charm that not even she knows about. Even if you had a face like an iron mask, it'd turn into pudding at the sight of her smile.

"The furnishings have definitely changed..."

"That's because Sasha is working hard."

"I see... then, you're getting along with Sasha?"

In contrast to that happy scene between granddaughter and grandmother, the two older looking men were having a serious father-son conversation. Well, we kept our voices down so as to not intrude, but I have to say... Callis and his father really do look alike. I wonder if I'll grow up to be such a dandy looking older man after another ten or twenty years? As I thought about that, I smiled at my still worried looking father.

"Yes. There was a time when I was the reason those two were unhappy, but... after awaking to their charms, I love them with all my heart now."

"I... I see..."

Father seemed pretty surprised. That being said, he has had an almost perpetual look of astonishment on his face ever since stepping inside, but I kept going without missing a beat.

"I have to say, once you awaken to love, you really do see everything in a different light, don't you? Was it the same between father and mother...?"

"Hmm... I'm not really so sure..."

"I was only asking because I'd never felt like this before... if it's alright with you, please tell me what you know."

"I-indeed? That... that is..."

"Oh? What are you two discussing over there?"

To my troubled looking father, mother, who had interrupted her talk with Laurier to look at us, must have seemed like finding an oasis in a desert. Not missing that stroke of good fortune, father looked relieved. Meanwhile, I was a little jealous about just how in step with each other a long time couple could be.

“I was just asking about how the two of you came to be in love with each other. What about you, mother, when did you realize father’s charm?”

“For you to ask something like that... what a surprise...”

“Is it that much of a shock? I was hoping that your experiences could be a helpful reference point, but... perhaps it’d be better to talk later.”

In what felt like a blink of an eye, our conversation came to an end as we arrived in front of Sasha’s room.

“Sasha, are you awake?”

“Yes...”, when I heard that from inside, I opened the door and spoke out to her.

“Sasha, are you feeling any better?”

“My Lord... Yes. After getting some sleep, I’ve managed to settle down somewhat.”

Still, Sasha’s face looked pale. I know it’s unreasonable especially given present company, but I couldn’t stop myself from walking over and cupping Sasha’s cheek in my hand before she could react.

“You shouldn’t push yourself... You know how much I hate it when you do that.”

“N-no... I can’t sleep if your parents are coming...”

Sasha such an admirable person. But really, she was being the unreasonable one here, as I gently gave her a hug.

“I can always tell when you’re pushing yourself too hard, Sasha. I already know that you’re the best wife in the world anyways Sasha, okay? You can greet those two after you’ve gotten better. The most important thing is to take care of your body.”

“But...”

“But if you’re going to keep insisting... once you’ve woken up, perhaps a bit of light punishment is in order... what do you think?”

Sasha’s pale face instantly flushed red at those words. As I felt that I wouldn’t be able to hold back any longer if I kept looking at Sasha in that state, I quickly kissed Sasha on the forehead and then tucked her back into bed... then walked back to my parents, who had witnessed the entirety of that scene from the entrance of the bedroom.

“My apologies... It seems that Sasha is still feeling under the weather, so if it’s all the same to you, could we wait until she’s feeling better before she gives you a proper greeting?”

“Ah... yes...”

“Mother? Is something the matter?”

Mother... Well, father as well, seemed frozen solid in utter shock. As I looked at them in confusion, it was mother who managed to thaw herself and stammer out a few words, not trying to hide her surprise.

“No, it’s just... you certainly get along well as a husband and wife, don’t you...?”

“Ha ha, I’ve just gotten a little softer around Sasha lately, that’s all.”

What a stinking lie! I’m sure that my parents had the exact opposite impression of me, considering they still looked completely flabbergasted.

Laurier stayed silent. Even though she’s so young, she’s sometimes really good at reading the air. That being said, it’s probably a side-effect of Sasha and I being so lovey-dovey on the daily, but... that slightly knowing face of Laurier’s was the only element left in play to heal my soul.

A Conversation Between Mother and Son

After that... we left Sasha's room, and I tried to guide the two towards the parlour to take a rest, but suddenly my mother grabbed my arm. Mother told father to chat with Laurier for a while, which he looked a little awkward about doing, as she dragged me into a separate room...

"Um... mother?"

After taking me aside, mother looked at me silently as if she was pondering the words she was going to say, then after a deep breath, it looked like she had come to a decision.

"You... are you truly Callis?"

"...What's brought this on?"

I felt a cold sweat begin to form on my brow at those sudden words, but mother didn't seem to notice as she kept going.

"If I've misunderstood something, then I am sorry. But, when I look at you, it's as if I'm looking at someone who is completely different to the memories I have of my Callis... it's as if someone has taken over their body."

What a terrifyingly potent power of observation. For a brief moment I wondered if my mother had also come from another world, but I kept that to myself as I shrugged.

"When people fall in love, they change. Didn't you change as well, mother?"

"Well... of course, I am happy that your relationship with Sasha has changed for the better. But, how do I put this... have you suddenly gotten over *that incident* that has been making you avoid the other sex, ever since you were a boy?"

"That's... well, I suppose so..."

One of the reasons that Callis had been cold to Sasha in the past was, as mother alluded to, due to his childhood trauma.

Specifically, when Callis was still barely five years old... he was assaulted by a maid that worked in this very mansion.

To be blunt, it was sexual. It seemed like that pedophile maid had taken an interest in Callis for some time and, when she found the opportunity, attacked him in his bed.

Fortunately, Callis managed to get help before she was able to do anything too despicable to him, but... the event undoubtedly left a mark on the young boy.

So, even though he's an older man now, that trauma stayed with him... whenever he thought of the opposite sex, of seeing eyes filled with lust, all he could remember was the fear when he gazed into the eyes of that predator as a boy, looming in the dark.

It was that moment that triggered Callis' misogyny.

He was fine with some women, like his mother and his nanny, as well as some of the maids he already knew and trusted, but Callis was unable to deal with other women who had come of age at all.

But, despite his fear of women leaving his potential to create a successor in doubt, Callis still grew into quite a man. However, although mother and father were unable to have another child, Callis' grandparents had a strong attachment to the lineage of the house, and wouldn't grant permission for an adoption... in short, they would accept no one else but Callis to inherit the House of Fall.

So, they did their best to pressure Callis into finding a fiancée... Since he felt like he was shaming his House, and his mother and father had allowed him to do whatever he liked until he came of age, Callis decided to join up with the knights.

Although they were happy for him to join the Order until he became an adult, Callis climbed the ranks far more quickly than anyone could have expected, soon gaining the moniker of 'Sword Demon'.

Well, a lot of other things happened as well, but... for now, I spoke back to my mother, who still stared at me suspiciously.

"Mother, it's true that, when I couldn't forget what happened in the past, I couldn't bring myself to look at either of them at all. But... those two have healed me, both in my heart and in my soul. If I were to say that the trauma was gone completely, that would be a lie, but... those two could love even a coward like me, so I have to return it as much as I can."

There was still a deep wound on Callis' heart. As the days roll by, I gain more and more of Callis' memories, and it feels like my personality is beginning to assert itself over his body, but... my desire to cherish those two people like my family will never change, no matter what.

Even if Callis' original personality disappears completely because of me, then I'll love those two in his place.

After mulling over what I said, mother looked at me silently for a moment... then, spoke with a short sigh.

"Is that so... I understand. I'll believe you."

"Are you fine with that?"

"I still have my doubts, but... no matter how different a person you may seem, you are still our Callis. Besides... it's only natural for a parent to want to believe in their son, isn't it?"

Was it because of my good mood after seeing Sasha? There was something in mother's smile that was truly refreshing.

Growing Closer

“Father!”

After talking with mother, we returned to the parlour where Laurier and my father were chatting, and she immediately ran up to me when she saw me. Feeling healed by that bright smile, I gently pet Laurier’s head as I spoke to her.

“Were you able to have a nice talk with your grandfather?”

“Yep!”

“I see... I’m happy to hear it.”

I felt my jaw begin to slacken as my daughter gave me a happy grin, but I had to endure it for now. Recently, I feel like I’ve gotten better at keeping a straight face. Well, it’s definitely hard to keep it up around Laurier and Sasha, but... I’d like to show those two Callis’ cool side.

“Father, sorry for making you wait.”

“Ah... yeah. Don’t mention it.”

Father still seemed a little confused as he watched me tussle Laurier’s hair, taking a couple of moments to realize what I’d said. Well, it makes sense for Callis’ parents to be a little surprised to see their son acting in a way he never had in front of them before, but... I’d like them to get used to it.

It seems as if mother has either already accepted it or didn’t want to look down in front of her granddaughter, as she began to chat with her happily again.

Actually, maybe mother is acclimatizing to all this a little too fast, but... I suppose women are just better at dealing with things like this than men?

—

I would’ve liked to enjoy my time together with them as a family for a little more, but... unfortunately, work was already beginning to pile up, so I gave Laurier and my parents my apologies and reluctantly returned to work.

Uuu... I was consumed with jealousy for father and mother as I worked, thinking about how much fun they must be having playing with my adorable Laurier, but as I was mulling over those thoughts trying to finish off my work as soon as possible so I could join them, I suddenly heard a knock on the door.

“Callis, is now a good time?”

“Father? Please, come in.”

My father entered after I invited him in. I thought he was still having tea with Laurier, but...

“Is something wrong?”

“Ah, well... no, merely... I felt a little out of place there, that’s all.”

“There... you mean the parlour where mother and Laurier are having tea?”

“Yes. I think Lishana might have taken to Laurier a little too fast...”

It seems that father felt a little bit awkward as mother began to dote heavily on her granddaughter. Well, I suppose it makes sense to feel a little uncomfortable as a third wheel if one person is doting on another.

Excuse me? What do you mean that’s not a convincing line coming from me, just because I happen to dote on Sasha and Laurier all the time?

That’s just because, you know... those two are irresistibly cute, right? It’s only natural as a man to want to dote on his cute wife and daughter!

Of course, I didn’t say something like that to my father, who had an awkward grimace on his face.

“Well, I suppose I didn’t expect mother to fall in love with Laurier so quickly, either.”

“Lishana has always had a soft spot for children, after all.”

“I can’t really remember much, but... do you get that kind of treatment from mother when you’re alone, father?”

Father looked a touch embarrassed at the question.

“...That’s a story for another time.”

“I see... well, as your son, I’m happy to see that the two of you still get along well.”

Apparently, it seemed like my mother was also quite sweet on father when they were alone. I’m sure that’s where I... or rather, Callis, inherited a little something from mother, I thought to myself, as I noticed father’s expression twist in surprise again.

“Is something wrong?”

“No... I was just thinking that you really have changed.”

“Is that so?”

“Yes, how should I say it... you’ve softened, somewhat. Not just towards Lishana and I, but generally.”

Softened... well, I suppose, if you compare me to the old Callis, I guess that’s true? Maybe he thinks I’ve entered what they call a ‘dere phase’? I’m not really sure how I feel about that... but, well, I can’t deny the change in personality.

“What’s more... I’d always thought that you harboured a distaste for Lishana and I. I never truly expected to see looks like that from you.”

“...I have never hated either of you.”

It’s definitely the truth that Callis was quite blunt and straight forward with his parents, but... he really never disliked them. I suppose he just didn’t know how to handle people...? I can see some of that in how awkward father was in front of me now as he tried to find the words he wanted to say. The truth was, Callis respected his father for raising him and was grateful to his mother for caring for him.

Father’s own expression softened into a more relaxed smile at my words.

“I see... I’m sorry for interrupting your work. That said, I’ve always wanted to share a drink with you as father and son... would you like to join me?”

“Of course. Please take good care of Laurier until I finish work.”

After that, my father turned and left the room... but, even though I was just staring at his back, he had a much happier atmosphere about him than when he entered.

A Conversation Over Drinks

I've failed... I hadn't expected to be driven into a situation like this at all.

"Thash why... you lishenin', Callish...? When it comes to me..."

"Yes, yes. I'm listening, father."

I was surprised to see such a different side of my father, who had already begun to lisp and was barely managing to hold himself upright, but... yeah, we've only had a few cups, you know? Apparently, my father was quite weak to drink. I thought the slight slur in his voice after one cup was just my imagination, but I quickly came to regret ever agreeing to go drinking with my father as he poked at my chest.

"Whenever I'm talking about you to Lishana, she always comforts me... uuu... I really did cry when I heard Laurier was born..."

"Is that so?"

I wonder just how many times I've heard him say that over the past hour... it's hard to understand his drunken ramblings completely, but the gist of it is that apparently he was always worried about me and talked to mother a lot about it, and even though it was hard, he managed to get through it because she was sweet on him... well, from my memories, I recall that father looked as composed as ever when he came to visit Laurier after her birth, but apparently he was barely holding back his tears.

Whenever he talked about how my mother would comfort him, his eyes seemed to be wistfully staring at something far away... but, well, I'm not really one to admonish someone else when it comes to deeply loving one's wife, so I stayed silent.

Of course, I'd much prefer to be loved by Sasha than hated myself... well, I'm still fairly sure that I'm still quite well loved, but I can almost see that maybe my heavy love for Sasha become something that blurs her own love for me in time.

Maybe if you asked someone else, they'd say I'm much too overbearing and Sasha might even look like a victim, but... well, Sasha is the type to need someone to depend on at times, so I suppose it's fine.

"Uuu... My head hurts..."

"Are you alright, father?"

As I was lost in thought, father might have been sobering up a touch as he complained about a headache. Yeah, that seems like the case. He's both fast to get drunk as well as fast to return to sobriety. I offered him a glass of water as I kept that thought to myself.

"Father, you aren't particularly good with drink, are you?"

"...Back in my prime, I could have drunk twice as much. Thanks."

"No, it was nothing."

Father thanked me and gulped the water down. After finishing it, father stared at the cup with a slightly lonesome look on his face.

“It has already been three years since Laurier was born, hasn’t it...?”

“I suppose that’s true?”

“I really was surprised when I talked with her today. Even though she’s young, she’s already so bright, but more than anything I was stunned by just how happy she looked...”

“How happy she looked?”

Certainly, I was surprised by how bright Laurier was myself. Even though I’m sure all parents would like to raise their child on a pedestal as advanced for their age, Laurier really did seem to be quite special for someone so young. I know that at an early age girls do develop faster than boys, but when I think that the true cause for how mature she is now was the horrible circumstances she grew up in, my heart aches... but, all that’s in the past now.

“Yes. She looks the happiest when she talks about you, you know...? But, really, I’m just glad to see such a smile on my granddaughter’s face...”

“Really...?”

I don’t know what Laurier talked about with my father when I wasn’t there, but just hearing that she spoke about me with a smile lit up something in my heart. Oh, this is bad... my daughter’s cuteness is beyond imagination!

“I am sure that, in the future, if she married into royalty she would become an excellent Queen... C-Callis...?”

Father’s words trailed off, probably because he saw the look on my face. Maybe it was because of the alcohol, maybe it was because father and I were alone, but the moment he brought up Laurier and the word marriage in the same sentence, my face became the spitting image of a Hannya mask.

“Father. I hope I’m mistaken, but when it comes to offers of engagement for Laurier, you haven’t received any... have you?”

“O-of course not. Well, nothing quite of that sort, but...”

“There has been, haven’t there?”

“T-that’s...”

I wonder if even the original Callis had ever looked so threatening as I must look to my father. Father’s face went pale, as his plan to bond as father and son over drinks had suddenly turned into a hard-boiled interrogation scene, but... he eventually managed to stammer out an answer.

“That is... well, there were the letters from Duke Matera and Marquis Victaire... and there were also the messages from my acquaintances of peerage abroad... O-of course, these were just formalities! They weren’t official offers, and anyways, their families don’t have children around Laurier’s age at all, so there shouldn’t be any problems, but...”

Father gulped before continuing.

“The inquiry from the Victaire family... might have been a bit more serious than the others...”

In case you were wondering what a Hannya mask is, it's [these](#)

Also, plot!

The Home of Marquis Victaire

“It’s a pleasure to welcome to my humble home, Duke Fall.”

“No no, the pleasure is all mine... if anything, I should be thankful for you obliging my sudden visit like this.”

The man in front of me was Marquis Taurus Victaire, head of the Victaire family. And right now, I’m being introduced into his home... but, just why am I here, you ask? Well, that’s because I couldn’t simply accept the information I had heard from my father lying down.

“So... if I may ask, what brings you here today, Duke Fall?”

After exchanging pleasantries, Marquis Victaire asked me a straight ball question, so I did my best to wear a gentle mask as I answered him.

“Ah, well, I heard that you were very close to my father, the previous Duke Fall, so I definitely wanted to meet such a man for myself.”

“I am very grateful to hear that, though I am sure you are much closer to the previous Duke Fall than I could ever hope to be.”

I’m still getting used to this, but there was something in the way that Marquis Victaire chose his words that almost seemed like a slight, but... well, I’m not really one for roundabout conversations like this, so I cut straight to the matter at hand.

“I also heard from my father that you have asked about the matter of my daughter’s engagement, Marquis Victaire.”

“Then, you’re here to accept our offer?”

Absolutely not. Well, that’s what I wanted to say, but I managed to choke those words down as I wore a fake smile.

“I cannot agree so readily since I have to consider every option when it comes to my daughter’s future. However, I did hear that your son is quite close in age to my daughter, Marquis Victaire, so I do hope that they can get along, especially since it can be quite hard to find suitable playmates amongst nobility.”

Honestly, when I heard that the Victaire family had contacted my father about potentially matching Laurier with their son, I didn’t know just what I’d end up doing, but... for now, I decided to at least take a relatively peaceful approach.

If the time came where I couldn’t avoid matching Laurier with a fiancée anymore, it would be good to build positive relationships with as many likely houses as I could so that Laurier and I could decide *together* who would be the best match for her.

Of course, the very idea of anyone taking my daughter as their fiancée twisted a knot in my gut, but... it was important that there was someone who Laurier could rely on in the future, like Sasha can rely on me.

Being her father, I couldn't realistically support Laurier for her entire life... or rather, I don't want to ruin my bond with Laurier as father and child... so, it was important that there was someone there who I felt could support Laurier in the future, so that I never felt the urge to interfere in her life and potentially make her hate me.

Besides, I already have Sasha. If I cling to Laurier too much and don't let her ever leave the nest, I can see her potentially getting jealous.

As strong as Sasha and Laurier are, there's no way they can always stand alone, so it's important that they both have someone who they can rely on when times are tough.

Well, I don't know if the perfect guy that's worthy of her actually exists out there, but... I'm not going to make any compromises when it comes to Laurier's happiness.

"Well, of course, we wish for the same thing. By all means, it would be excellent to have my son meet your daughter..."

"Before that... I'd like to meet your son, if at all possible, is he free today?"

As I said that, Marquis Victaire's courteous smile twitched slightly, as he cast a glance to the butler that stood behind him.

"Yes... that should be fine, but... it may take some a few days to prepare my son to meet your daughter, so perhaps if we can schedule that meeting between them for another date..."

Marquis Victaire seems almost obsessive in trying to bring his son and my daughter together. It wouldn't be such an unusual thing, but... just what is this strange feeling I've had for a little while now?

"Even if I may have to wait a while, I would like to meet him today by all means... would I be imposing upon you too much?"

"No... it's just, it would be unthinkable to keep a man like Duke Fall waiting like that..."

Hmm... yeah, there's definitely something up. There's something strange about how he really wants to keep me from seeing his son today. Rather, to be honest, it feels like he's hiding something.

Honestly, I wish I could just go home as well, but... I don't want my father to be bothered with these engagement proposals anymore, so it would be best to wrap this all up as fast as I can. Even if I plan on refusing the offer, I want to see the boy's face at least once... what's more, if this house really is full of landmines like my intuition is telling me, then I can easily cross it off the list for Laurier.

If I discover any pitfalls or skeletons in the closet, I can use them as grounds to decline, and if I find any exploitable weaknesses I can use them to force the Victaire house to withdraw their offer using whatever means I see fit.

With those kinds of dark thoughts in my mind, I played along with Marquis Victaire.

An Incongruous Meeting

After talking with Marquis Victaire for a little while longer, he eventually relented and I followed him towards his son's room.

Well, to put it bluntly, I basically pressured him into doing it, but that's not important.

The butler lead the way in front of the two of us, and as we walked deeper into the mansion the Marquis' behaviour became slightly erratic. It's as if he was trying to hide something, as his eyes darted this way and that even whilst we were talking, like he was desperately looking for an escape.

Or... Maybe it was just my imagination, but there was also something in the Marquis' eyes that seemed like he was looking at the walls and doors we passed as if he hadn't seen them in a long time, even though this was his house?

"This way, if you please."

As those sorts of thoughts floated through my mind, the butler who was leading us through the halls stopped in front of a certain door.

"Young Master Masque is currently practicing his swordsmanship inside."

"He's training swordsmanship? Inside a room?"

"Yes. His current instructor made a point of having the young master practice inside. It was determined that he could be taught the basics without damaging the interior of the property."

...Excuse me, what? What the hell is this?

As strange as it was that the boy was practicing swordsmanship inside, what was stranger still was that Marquis Victaire seemed to share my expression of surprise.

"Marquis Victaire, your son has certainly taken up swordsmanship at quite an early age, hasn't he?"

"Y-yes... I thought it was necessary to build his character. M-moreover, it's important for him to learn about things he may not encounter at home."

Well, you can say that, but...

"I suppose this sort of training would be expected for a military family, but as I recall Marquis Victaire, your house has been ministers to the crown for centuries... do you intend for your son to be a knight?"

"Well, that's..."

"Well, being the outsider that I am, it wouldn't be my place to comment too much, but... at the risk of sounding rude, practicing swordsmanship at such a young age can place undue stress on a child's body and could lead to complications for them later in life, so I really can't recommend it."

Of course, there are stories where the protagonist becomes powerful because they train from an early age, but... that's only possible for someone with both innate talent as well as the intelligence to understand their body's own limitations. If this was a military family with a lineage of being knights and commanders, then perhaps they would have a method for safely introducing their children to training with the sword when they were young, but it's hard to imagine that a family that historically

valued the pen over the sword like the House of Victaire have such a method. What's more, if they've had to bring in an instructor from outside the family, then chances are they didn't hire someone who was typically used to training noble children...

Yeah... I've already got a bad feeling about all this.

Marquis Victaire looked like he was trying to mumble out an answer, but... I didn't care about that, and opened the door in front of me without hesitation.

There were two people inside the room; one was a man who at first glance looked like a mercenary, with a large and muscular build. The other was a young boy with green hair who couldn't have been much older than Laurier, but... I opened the door just in time to see him collapsing to the ground.

Quickly rushing inside, I laid two fingers on the child's pulse. As I felt a faint beating under my fingertips, I was relieved, but that feeling was washed away when I saw the fresh cuts and bruises all over the boy's skin. When I saw that some of the bruises were a mix of deep purple and a sickly looking yellow, I felt my reason begin to snap as I remembered walking in on seeing something similar happen to Laurier.

"...Marquis Victaire. Would you care to explain just what is happening here?"

"T-This is... T-that's right! I'm certain that this is just the proper way of being taught swordsmanship! Yes!"

"Yeah, that's right."

As the Marquis squirmed, he looked in desperation to the large man in the center of the room, who grinned as he answered.

"I don't know who the hell you're supposed to be, but this is how I teach swordsmanship, and I get results. You'd stop disturbing us, if you know what's good for you."

"Your method of teaching is to mercilessly beat a young boy?"

"An amateur like you wouldn't understand, but this is how things are done. In fact, y'know that this is how the famous Grandmaster of the Order of Knights, Viscount Grieze, also teaches swordplay?"

"Oho...? That would be news to me. I happen to be quite good friends with Viscount Grieze, and I've seen how he teaches myself out on the training grounds, however..."

The man cut me off with a nasty sneer and a laugh.

"Well, this is how I've decided to teach, so I'll do it any damn well way I please, what does an outside like you know?"

"And this here, this is the result of your teachings?"

"Yeah."

As desperately as I wanted to throw an insult back in the face of that man who smirked at me... I managed to cool myself down and carried the still unconscious child to a nearby seat, before turning to look at Marquis Victaire.

“Marquis Victaire, this child is your son, is he not?”

“Y-yes... However, what...”

“I have one request to make of you. Will you leave this boy’s swordsmanship training to me?”

The Sword Demon's True Power

After leaving the house, I found myself in the courtyard of the Victaire family mansion

After taking off my jacket so that I could move more freely, I faced the violent instructor the Victaire family had hired. And, watching from the seats, was the Marquis whose brow was matted with nervous sweat, along with his son who had regained consciousness.

If you ask me just how I ended up in this sort of predicament...? Well, I guess it's because I just couldn't help but meddle.

So... after I offered to take over Masque's swordsmanship training, the teacher that Marquis Victaire had hired vehemently interjected. Well, I could have silenced him in a moment by letting him know I was a knight, but... I wanted to give a man who can hurt a child and laugh about it his own medicine at least once, so I offered him a duel.

That teacher immediately accepted my offer, and even when Marquis Victaire tried to calm things down he completely ignored him and began to walk towards the courtyard.

Well, Marquis Victaire might have been saying that for my sake, being from a ministerial family he might not think a nobleman could stand a chance against a trained soldier, but... even if I doubt I can measure up to his true potential, I have faith in this body that Callis had honed over the years.

Well, that being said, it has been quite a while since Callis was in a real fight, and I didn't bring the sword I typically practiced with either instead borrowing one that Marquis Victaire provided, so I was a little worried... but, well, it should be fine.

"Umm..."

As I was warming up before the duel, the Marquis' son, Masque, suddenly called out to me from close behind.

"What's wrong?"

"...Why are you going so far?"

Masque spoke to me in a quiet tone of voice, so that the Marquis sitting a little while away wouldn't hear him.

"I... I'm... not really a child of this house... That's why no one really cares about me... but why are you helping me...?"

Well, originally... if I had heard that Masque was adopted before all this happened, I would have been surprised, but I managed to figure it out after seeing the scene from earlier.

"Let's see... I suppose if you twisted my hand, this is repentance of sorts?"

"Reppen... tants...?"

As he looked confused, I tussled my hand through the boy's green hair.

"Well, it's fair to say that part of the situation you find yourself in is my fault, I guess? So, what I want to say is that I'm trying to take some responsibility for that."

The green-haired boy wouldn't understand what I meant, but that's fine. In a way, I guess this is for the sake of my own ego as well.

Well, at first I wanted to do this because I couldn't bear to see a young child suffer the same way Laurier had, but when I saw this boy wake up I suddenly realized it myself.

Not just that he was only an adopted son to Marquis Victaire, but he is, in fact, a boy who would have been taken into my home in the original otome game... simply put, I realized that the Masque in the game was the adoptive brother of Laurier, the villainess, as well as one of the capture targets himself.

Well, it's not as if that was the first thing I was thinking of, but after the incident with the Prince I've been trying my best to recall the other capture targets from the game, or something like that...? Yeah, well, simply put, it's my responsibility that this child is in this situation because I never sought to adopt him like in the original game, so I feel like I have to take responsibility here.

"Well, don't worry about it so much, it'll all be fine."

As the child looked nervous, I gave him a reassuring smile.

—

"Now then... You ready over there? Mister Duuuuke?"

After limbering up, the swordsmanship instructor asked me that. Is it because he's so cock-sure of himself? He had an awfully lopsided grin on his face, but... I nodded curtly and answered him.

"Ready. But, first of all... if you want to save yourself the trouble of nursing your wounds later, it would be in your best interests to give up early on."

"Oh... you sure are confident, ain't ya?"

I tried to give him some honest advice, but the man's cocky smirk seemed to only intensify.

Oh, well, I gave him a fair warning, so I guess all that remains is to trust in Callis' body?

"Now then, the signal to start... Marquis Victaire? May I leave it in your hands?"

"Y-yes. However, Duke Fall... Please don't push yourself too hard..."

"I'm aware."

As I turned, I saw that Masque still had a worried look on his face, so I afforded him a quick smile before refocusing my attention on the man in front of me.

"T-then... Begin!"

The battle commenced with Marquis Victaire's words.

As the instructor walked towards me, slowly raising his blade like he was winding up for a swing... I ignored his attempt at intimidation and plunged straight toward him, knocking away the blade he loosely held out in front of him.

"Wha!?"

Marquis Victaire and the instructor both had a delayed reaction of shock, as the man's sword clattered to the ground a few metres away. The man was agape in confusion as he stared at me, like he didn't know what just happened, but I spoke coldly as I held the tip of my sword at his throat.

"If you wish to continue, I can let you regather your weapon, but... just so you're aware, if this were a true fight, your head would have already departed your shoulders."

"...Tch! Don't get cocky over some dumb luck!"

The now defenseless man suddenly came to his senses and cursed me, but I allowed him to back up and collect his blade again.

After picking his sword back up, the man didn't make any attempt at hiding his intentions, as he ran straight towards me with a vicious swing that could have cut me in two.

Sidestepping, I managed to easily avoid it. Honestly, I'm pretty sure that if I were in my old body, that would've killed me, but... Callis' physical ability was so high that I was able to agilely avoid it without a problem.

"Shit! Come here, you...!"

The man's skill with a blade didn't seem bad, but... was it just purely an inherent difference in physical talent? There was something about Callis' body that just rendered everything he did completely harmless, even a little pathetic.

I avoided his attacks over and over again, sometimes using Callis' speed to disarm him before letting him collect his blade again.

Eventually, the man's breathing became hoarse and haggard, but with barely a drop of sweat on my brow I spoke out to him again.

"Are you ready to give up yet?"

"...Fuck!! This is bullshit! There's no way in hell I'm losing to some dainty noble!!"

I wasn't really trying to provoke him, but... at any rate, it seems like I stoked his fighting spirit back up.

I don't really get anything out of extending this fight anymore, so... should I get serious?

After disarming him one more time with ease, this time I thrust my blade forward, stopping its glinting point an inch away from his eyeball.

"If you don't give up now, are you willing to continue with only one eye?"

"F-Fuck yooooou!!"

The man twisted his head away from my blade and tried to strike at me with his fist, but with a flick of the sword, I stopped his strike with its edge.

"Guaaah!? M-My hand!!!!?"

...And, as a result, after punching straight into the edge of the blade, the man doubled over in pain, clutching his hand.

Since I didn't swing, or perhaps it's because his punch wasn't that hard, he didn't lose a finger, but I could still see the blood flowing down his arm.

Well, just that much won't be enough to kill him, but... I'm getting tired of this, so I held my sword high above the man who was doubled over on the ground, and...

"Well then... so long."

"A-Ahh!?"

...brought my blade down in the dirt, right in front of his face.

As his life must have flashed before his eyes, the man collapsed into unconsciousness, but... I didn't care about that since my eyes were on Marquis Victaire, who looked at us in astonishment.

"Now then... you should have no objections to me teaching your son, correct?"

It should go without saying that, next to his completely pale-looking adoptive father, that green-haired boy was standing up as he looked my way, something sparkling in those eyes of his.

A Return to the Everyday

“Haa... Now I’ve done it...”

As I sat in the carriage on the way home... I held my head in my hands, thinking about what I had just done.

The reason, of course, was the adopted son of Marquis Victaire... or rather, the fact that I helped Masque, who in the original otome game was both my adopted son as well as a capture target for the heroine.

Well, no, it’s not as if I regret helping him at all.

There was no way I could leave a child to suffer through the same sort of thing that Laurier had, and it was obvious that Masque was being treated poorly, so that’s not an issue, but...

“Why does it feel like I’m getting involved with all the capture targets myself...?”

As a result of our duel, the mercenary instructor was fired. It was agreed I would take over, but... after I calmed down, I couldn’t help but wonder if I was an idiot for getting involved in something that could one day hurt Laurier.

Why did this happen...? The only reason I went to that house was to crush some pesky bugs that were trying to attach themselves to my Laurier...

“And even though it’s just once a week, my workload is going to increase again...”

What’s more, even though I’m already so busy, for some reason I’ve taken even more work upon myself.

“But, well...”

I remembered the look Masque gave me as I was leaving. That boy’s eyes were shining with something I can only call respect... well, if I can shape his character properly through training, I can make sure that he won’t be a threat to Laurier in the future as well.

Alright, let’s go ahead with that.

—

“Father!”

As I returned to the mansion, it was Laurier who first rushed at me as I stepped in the door.

As Laurier pulled at the fabric of my pants, innocently but adamantly insisting I hug her, I swept her into my arms, my serious thoughts from before being washed away by the enormous effort I was exerting to keep a straight face.

“I’m home, Laurier.”

“Welcome back, father!”

Smiling at me like an angel... Yep! Laurier is just absurdly cute!

Well, of course I kept that to myself, as I restrained myself and asked Laurier a question with a gentle smile on my face instead.

“Your timing was very good... perhaps you were waiting for me?”

“Yes! I wanted to meet father... was I bad...?”

Oof! I almost staggered at that heavy blow I couldn't avoid. Even though I had just survived a duel without a single scratch, just a few words from my daughter was enough to completely catch me off guard... Honestly, Laurier and Sasha may really be the death of me!

Well, putting Laurier aside... if Sasha wasn't pregnant, she had the ability to make me lose my reason, and turn me into a wolf... If we're not careful, our family might grow quite large.

“Now then... I need to talk to Sasha about a few things that happened today, but... what will you do, Laurier?”

“I wanna go together with father!”

“I see... Then, are you fine if I carry you upstairs like this, then?”

“Yep!”

A full bloomed smile spread across her face... ah... just seeing that face wiped away all my worries...

As I carried that adorable girl in my arms, I went up the steps to my beloved wife's room, where she was still recovering.

After all, my wife and daughter really are like an oasis in the desert!

Villainess' Father -c38 Small Battle

“Ah, you’re back.”

As soon as I arrived in front of Sasha’s room while holding Laurier, it was mother who spoke. She had just came out of the room.

(Callis) “Mother, is Sasha awake?”

(Callis’ Mother) “Oh! Good Morning dear!”

Laurier who is in my arms greets mother as she smiles. While she is doing so, mother gave a smile to a lovely sight of her grandchild.

(Callis’ Mother) “Sasha is awake, she has been waiting for your return, so hurry.”

“I will”

Having said that, I try to enter the room while still holding Laurier, but not before I noticed that Mother had put out a hand and I turned my head.

“What’s with that hand? Unfortunately, there are no souvenirs. “

“Well, I didn’t expect such a thing. I want you to lend me my cute grandchild .”

I see. She was referring to Laurier. Mother seems to really like Laurier ... but I was protesting a little because I want to resist her cause I do not want to easily pass a lovely girl such as her.

“I would like to spend time with my daughter to heal my fatigue today ...”

“Do it later. I want to have tea with Laurier now.”

Sparks are about to fly. With my daughter, or her grandchild, hanging in the balance, a terrible storm is brewing between mother and son... Although, contrary to the tense atmosphere in the room, Laurier spoke up somewhat timidly.

“Father... do you not get along with grandmother?”

I’m still going to see Laurier after this . I don’t know what to do, but I can’t wait to see what I can do with the situation.

It was a joke to Laurier, but as I thought this 1.contentious development should not have been shown, and so I decided to raise the white flag myself.

“Laurier... I’m sorry, but will you wait for me while you have tea with grandmother, I’ll join you later”

Was that alright? When I sent an eye contact to my mother, my mother nods and stretches her hands out and reaches out to Laurier.

“ Come on Laurier, Let’s wait together. ”

“...Okay “

Laurier took her hands from mine and reached out to my mothers. But it seemed like for a moment she was down, so I patted her head and gave her a smile.

“...It’s okay.”

A smile from an angel. I can feel so much when I see Laurier with a smile on her face as if she were an angel,I think that I am tired after all. I leave Laurier to my mother and then I enter my beautiful and adorable Sasha’s room.

Villainess' Father -c39 Report and Healed

“Welcome home, m’lord.”

I left Laurier to my mother and entered Sasha’s Room. As I entered the room my wife greeted me with a warm, loving smile.

Yup, this is what I wanted to see the Smile of my wife.

The expression of my kind wife envelops me as I approach Sasha in a gentle manner.

“I’m home. Sasha, how are you feeling?”

“I’m feeling fine.”

“Okay... that’s good to hear.”

That’s good However I’ll observe Sasha for a bit since my beloved daughter can always put up with mother. Observing a pregnant wife is more important than most things. Sasha blushes in embarrassment as I gaze at her.

“Oh, um... m’lord. When you stare so much, that is...”

(TLN: When Reading m’lord make sure to pronounce it as “*me lord*”)

“Huh?... Ah, I’m sorry, it’s just I can’t resist adoring the face of my beautiful wife.”

“Is it cute?”

Sasha Smiles in embarrassment...OH. MY. GOD..IT’S TOO CUTE! My wife’s face when she is embarrassed is like an arrow that went through my heart. It feels like my heart is purified every time she does it.Yosh!! I realized once again that this is what I WILL protect.

Sasha becomes flustered at the moment, but suddenly I realized something.

“Um, m’lord Did something happen?”

“Huh? What is it?”

“Oh, um... pardon if I misunderstood. But somehow My Lord’s expression seems a bit more tired than usual ...”

I was a little surprised by the words that Sasha said.Although I usually have Callis’s expression, but I

do agree how tired I am.

“You can see that?”

“Yeah....um could it be you’re doing something unreasonable for my or Laurier’s sake again?”

“Working too hard? For your sakes? I’m totally not! Not even a little. I swear.”

(TLN: The Kanji had multiple different meaning it was taking me a bit to figure out if someone could help me it would be nice)

Since she figured out that I was tired, I decided to tell her what happened throughout my day. Well, of course I didn’t tell her about the capture target nor that otome game related stuff.

Then, as I finished the story, Sasha grabbed my hand and said gently.

“M’lord ... I love My Husband who works hard for me and Laurier. However, don’t overdo it. If m’lord is gone I can’t Imagine how I...I...”

Sasha showed a sad expression before she could finish the sentence. I cursed my foolishness seeing this. I chose to act because I didn’t want to see Sasha and Laurier look like this.

And yet, it’s still not acceptable to have Sasha with this expression. That gives the raising phrase with the thought of cutting herself out of the relationship in an Otome game.

(TLN: It said Maiden game But Otome game sounds better)

I couldn’t stand this any longer, so I hugged sasha slowly with all my warmth behind it and said.

“It’s alright... I’ll be by Sasha’s side forever”

“R...really?”

“Yes... it’s true I promise”

“W...Will you stay my husband until death?”

“Rather, I’m not going to let Sasha go, so be prepared.”

“M’lord”

Sasha hugs me tightly ,as shivers slightly. As I hugged her gently I swore that I’ll protect the two of them no matter what happens.

Villainess' Father -c40 Reflection

After a while, Sasha was tired and fell asleep, so I gently put Sasha back in her bed and left her room quietly.

Still... it's really stupid of me to make Sasha have a worried and sad expression.

I want Sasha and Laurier to smile, and I don't want them to worry about me even when I have difficulties in my heart.

Speaking with the spirit of self-sacrifice may be good. But it is worse than anything to worry someone important to you. Yeah, I'm repenting now.

When I was deep in thought, I arrived at the room where mother and Laurier were having tea, so I shook off my latent thoughts and entered the room.

"Oh? It took longer than expected."

The figure of mother elegantly drinking tea as I entered the room was impressive, but as my Sasha is usually even more awe-inspiring than this, I was able to respond to my mother with indifferent eyes. I was not particularly anxious about my response because of this, because I am accustomed to Sasha tasting tea like a goddess.

"Mother ... what is that envious sight?"

"Whatever do you mean by an envious sight?"

"As clarification, it's concerning my dear daughter peacefully lying down on your lap."

That's right, I noticed it immediately after I had entered the room. Mother held Laurier in her lap. As I stared and once again said "What an enviable sight," my mother giggled.

"Oh my, I wonder if Callis also wants a lap pillow? I wonder if Sasha is unsatisfied as the spoiled mother."

"I'd like to rebuke further, but at least know Sasha is the only one who will be spoiled, so it's different. You know that, don't you?"

Well, I'd like Sasha to be a little more conservative, if I were you.... Well, well, because I'm sweetened with Sasha, let's try it this time.

Well, I want Sasha to be a little spoiled as well, but I should probably act more conservative.

When I decided on that kind of thing secretly, I turned back to mother talking with a serious expression.

"Well, this isn't completely your fault."

"Is it?"

“Laurier has been worried because you’ve been acting strange since this morning. I was relieved that you had arrived home safely and went to be with her.”

“That’s my responsibility....”

I’ve been so worried about Laurier... I really don’t think I’m going to do it. To not make them worry and make them have such an expression... This isn’t much different from the previous Callis. I should be more careful not to make them worry about me anymore. Definitely.

“Mother, will you punish me later?”

“If you like pain, have Sasha do it”

“I don’t want Sasha’s hands to get hurt. Besides, Sasha is too kind. She wouldn’t be able to punish me”

That’s why, in order to put that feeling to rest, I want mother to punish me. While Sasha and Laurier are so kind that they won’t be able to properly punish me, more than anything, this is my selfish way of doing things, because of this, my mother is the only one I can rely on.

At last, mother sighed at my words and responded,

“Understood. I will scold you in secret from Laurier and Sasha”

“Thank you ... Also, will you change the lap pillow for Laurier in a little bit?”

“No.”

With that, mother and I fought quietly over Laurier’s lap pillow until she woke up

Villainess' Father – c41 Farewell

“Grandma, will you come again?”

My daughter, Laurier, asked my mother in a feeble, but lonely tone. Today happens to be the day when mother and father returns to their mansion. Sasha is taking care of her while resting in her room, so it's up to me and Laurier to see them off.

Mother smiled and replied to Laurier, who had a lonely expression, and braced myself for the emotional pain that was to come. .

“Naturally.”

“Yay!”

While it is indeed a lovely sight seeing mother and Laurier getting along, it still leaves a gnawing irritation within me. Rather, I don't like it one bit! Every time she talks to Laurier, she always brags to me about it later! No, I do hope Laurier is happy, but it seems like my mother flirts with Laurier and Sasha just to flaunt on purpose... she's a rival.

Of course, I don't intend to fight with mother in front of Laurier and Sasha. Even if it is a joke, I don't want to show any poor behavior in front of them. I'm going to give Laurier all the support I can, and I'll protect Sasha with my all as well. She's a strong girl, and of course, because of me, she knows the dark parts of humanity. She deserves to be happy from now on.

Aside from that....

“Laurier. Say hello to your grandfather.”

Father, whose figure is seen chuckling a bit behind my mother, can't help from joining in. It's not like he seems to be lonely, but I can't help but see mother's figure overlaying him as he's doting upon Laurier..

Laurie nodded from my words and looked to father with a smile.

“Please come again, Grandfather.”

“...Why, thank you Laurier.”

It's somewhat awkward, but it would be normal if there was this much distance. Rather, my mother isn't an anomaly.

I smile at Laurier while pushing such thoughts to the back of my mind, and then begin to talk to mother.

“Mother. Thank you for everything. Please give me help again when Sasha gives birth again..”

“Yeah, even so, I can't believe the day would come where you would ask for help with Sasha's childbirth.”

Mother says so with a teasing smile. Yes, indeed, I did invite mother to come here and support Sasha before the birth. I wish I could support Sasha myself, but there is a limit to what I could do, and so I

was driven to ask mother for help.

There may be some people who don't think that giving birth is a big deal, and question whether giving birth is difficult. However, mothers need to be especially mentally supported because it is very hard to give birth.

The only thing a man can do is to watch the time while working, show his face to his wife and take care of his daughter. At that, even though Laurier is troublesome, she is clever and does not want to make others worry. I'll be shocked if she goes through a rebellious period, so should I not love her now?

"Well, I can't exactly help Sasha and Laurier on my own in the event of an accident." (Callis)

"I used to try to do it myself, but it's changed a lot." (Callis' Mother)

"Well, because I have also awakened to true love." (Callis)

"Oh? I can't beat my husband's love." (Callis' Mother)

"It's because love depends on the depth of feelings, not through time."

Laurier did not notice the hidden battle between mother and I. As we were fighting about the concept of love, Laurier was talking to father with an angelic smile.

Villainess' Father – c42 If you have time to be jealous, let's be in love!

“Father’s snacks are always delicious.”

Says Laurier while eating cookies with a smile. I’m not sure if eating so many sweets is a good idea or not, though. Ah, but I want to keep giving Laurier more of my sweets. No, it should be fine! Laurier and I have been singing and exercising every day, and I’ve been calorie counting our family meals.

Although calories couldn’t be calculated completely accurately because the food was not exactly the same as Japan, Laurier is definitely not fat now. Rather, she has become more beautiful as of late. While she was adorable originally, she was all too thin.

“Fufu, Laurier. A girl should eat more modestly.”

Additionally, Sasha is participating in today’s tea time. Is this a period of stability in having a child? Her stomach is growing gradually, and I felt relieved my own child was growing safely. Of course, Larier is my real daughter as well. However, when Sasha gave birth to her, I was still Callis’ old personality. Not only was I cold to her, I personally restrained her.

“Sasha, you’re beautiful even when you drink tea.”

“Oh, is that so”

“Indeed, I can’t help but stare.”

Sasha’s face reddens immediately. It seems as if she has not gotten used to my affection. It seems it would be like this after such a long period of no physical contact. However, it has already been over half a year, and I’m still falling more in love with her cute actions.

As we enter such a lovey dovey state, I feel anger emanating from my daughter.

It seems as if whenever I try to flirt with Sasha like this, little Laurier always comes to my side.

“Dad, I want you to feed me!”

“Hmm? I don’t mind.”

I take a cookie from the pile and hold it up to Laurier’s mouth. Quickly taking the whole cookie from my hand she looks up to me with a big smile.

“It’s delicious dad!”

... It’s too angelic for my heart to handle. I’m not sure if it’s just me, but my daughter is definitely the cutest. This is probably the reason why I’m so sensitive now, Laurier and Sasha just keep getting more adorable.

It makes me so happy that Laurier trusts me so much, but I have some seriously mixed feelings that I will have to marry such a cute daughter off in the future. If Laurier’s personal search for a husband doesn’t make much progress, I’ll have to find a husband for her. Anyone man who is serious with her and will not cheat, or who can say that he will be genuinely happy with Laurier is fine. And if Laurier

happens to awake to homosexuality... I'll cheer her on as much as possible.

"Laurier, I'm not going to do it."

While I was thinking of such idle thoughts, it seems like Sasha was having a little trouble resisting Laurier.. As her husband, I knew that Sasha was simply jealous and held up a cookie for her as well..

"Sasha, open wide."

"Ah! Dear? This is..."

"Won't you accept this from me? Do you not want it?"

"That's not it at all! Rather, I'm happy!"

Sasha covered her face from saying such words. She seems rather embarrassed. Yeah. My wife is too cute!

And thus, this brief moment of peace in the afternoon passes like a swift wind. I think to myself that I have to protect these two people with my life. I can't be careless. The next troublesome matter is closer than I probably think.

Villainess' Father – c43 His Majesty's Invitation

“An invitation?”

“Yes. It looks like an invitation to a small tea party hosted by His Majesty, the King”

As the person to handle my paperwork, my secretary immediately reported the matter to me. He passed the letter to me, and I quickly read over what it had written. What he had said was not a lie, but the letter invited me, as well as Laurier and Sasha to the tea party. This is...

“This timing is a bit poor...”

Although Sasha has been stable for a while now, I still didn't feel secure going out for an extended period of time. I don't want Sasha to go through any trouble. What should I do...?

“Lord Callis, I don't believe you would refuse this.”

“Zeke. Stop quietly reading my mind.

As of late, Zeke has understood my personality and has been nonchalantly reading my heart. It's incredible to say the least, but I'm not quite happy with it. If Sasha and Laurier could read my mind, however... No, that would be no good. If my affection could be transmitted to them, it may surprise them too much. Actually, if it's those two, they would accept it without worrying about it... Laurier's adorable smile and Sasha's shyness would be a sight to see, but....

I was forced from my tangent by the need of answering Zeke's question.

“It will all depend on Sasha's physical condition. Also, if Sasha and Laurier don't like it, I'll turn it down.”

“You'll decline his Majesty's tea party invitation!?”

“His Majesty would not mind this at all. Well, the other nobles will make a racket, but that doesn't matter.”

To be blunt, my first priority is my family; the country is secondary. Of course it's important to look and plan for the future, but I don't want to miss out on the happiness in front of me. It's a waste to look ahead but ignore what is happening in front of you.

This may not be the best way to think as a good nobleman, but in my mind, if I can't protect what's precious to me, I don't deserve to be a nobleman in the first place. If this Otome game set country makes Laurier and Sasha unhappy, I would have no qualms traveling with only the two of them and a sword in hand. In an emergency, we have an escape route, and I have been planning with the other employees in a bad situation, so no matter what happens, it will be fine.

While it is certainly disrespectful to ignore the tea ceremony hosted by the king himself, but I think it will be okay because he is not the sort of man who would be angered at such a small detail.

However, if the rest of the aristocrats find out about it, they will certainly use it as material to attack us, but it's not a problem because there isn't much to do with it.

Well, whatever....

“The first thing to do is consulting with Sasha and Laurier about their thoughts.”

“I don’t know what the two of them are going to say, but I will do what they really want, so there shouldn’t be any problems.”

Villainess' Father – c44 Too Proud So I want to Boast

“A tea party...?”

Hmmm~~

Sasha looks at me with a puzzled look with her head slightly tilted. I inwardly thought such an expression was adorable as well, as I did my best smile with Callis' overly handsome face.

“It's a small tea party hosted by His Majesty, the King. It seems that he had invited you, Laurier, and me.”

“To His Majesty's tea party?”

“Yes, he did. Maybe the queen or Selena mentioned you to the King.”

(EN: For people who forgot, Selena is the princess who had also reincarnated before. Both the TL and I both completely forgot lol.)

The King is a busy person, and so when having a tea party like this, he definitely has a purpose. For some reason, I have a bad feeling about this. Sasha agreed that perhaps the queen or Selena had invited her, but even so, there should be a more important purpose in calling our whole family.

For example, making the prince Laurier's fiancée...

If it is that, I will refuse even if it makes Laurier hates me. I believe Laurier and the prince are close in age, and the prince probably is not a bad kid. Nonetheless, if he is going to fault Laurier in the future, I'll see him as an enemy.

Nonetheless, such a scenario has not been decided yet, and there's no indication he is going to be a scum prince in the future, so I may just be worrying too much.

“Therefore, I thought I would ask Sasha what you would do.”

“What I would say?”

“Whether to participate in this tea party or not. If you're not feeling well, you can turn it down.”

“Eh... But ... It's an invitation from His Majesty, right?”

“Even so, I'm worried about Sasha. I can't stop thinking that you might overdo it.”

After I said that, I put my hand on Sasha's cheek and whispered into her ear, who was surprised.

“If my pretty wife falls again, I will never be able to forgive myself. I want the people I love to always smile.”

(T/N: Smooth.....)

“Oh, dear!? Well... um... um... er....”

Sasha is now blushing and panicking... It's too cute! It's absolutely normal that I had a child with her. The wolf inside of me can't stay quiet... I'm reaching my limit because I haven't done anything with her lately. I'll be patient with physical contact until our child is born.

Even though I want to attack Sasha, I have to think about the timing. My pride won't allow me to hold Sasha just for the sake of my selfish desires.

Even still, it's too cute... I love Sasha too much.

Sasha panicked cutely for quite a while, and even after calming down, she still had a red face.

"I'll go there with you."

"Are you sure you're okay?"

"Yes. The Queen will attend the tea ceremony as well, correct?"

"I believe it will be so."

"Then... I would like to report to the Queen, that... um... you and I ..."

Even as her speech tapered off, the feelings of her words were felt by me. It's true that the queen and Sasha are friends and they would perhaps like to meet up, but it may be that she really wants to show how lovey-dovey she is with me?

That's too cute! You're too cute!

It seems as if, after a while, it's inevitable that I love Sasha to such an extent. Yep. My wife is too cute.

Villainess' Father –c45

“Father!”

Laurier charged at me as soon as I opened the door. I reflexively smiled and bent down to scoop her up.

“Laurier. Did you like your classes today?”

“Yes! How are you?”

My daughter who worries about me is adorable. I suppressed the urge to cry out and inwardly think to myself of how much of a good girl she is to do so at this age.

“I’m doing okay. All my exhaustion blows away when I see you and your mother, though.”

“Yay!”

Laurier smiles happily at my words... Dear god, the smile of my wife and daughter is the best way to be rejuvenated after a long day at work. I live for this priceless smile. I thought about how blessed I was and enjoyed holding Laurier for a while.

“Do you want to go to a tea party with your father and mother?”

As I talked to Laurier about the Tea Party. She said with a smile that she was happy when I told her that it was a tea party that Sasha and I were going to together.

“I’m glad that father and mother are together!”

“More than just Sasha and Callis, His Majesty, the queen, and Selena are all going to be together.”

I’m not saying that I’m stunned that my butler Zeke was listening in, but... Regardless, I’ll tell Laurier that I want her to have fun herself.

Even though this Otome game is probably going to drag in Laurier in the future, she doesn’t need to worry about it now. Of course, she will eventually have to make her own decisions, and that may include marriage.

At that, I can’t deny the situation of a political marriage. For a nobleman, it is important to increase networking by connecting houses together, but...

Of course, there is a little resistance to marrying my daughter as a father, but I can’t show that side of myself to her for the rest of my life. I don’t want to destroy the father figure I have had towards Laurier until now.

“So, what do you think? Do you want to go with me?”

“Yes! Also, dad, can I have a favor.”

“What is it?”

As she turned to me and asked, she had an angelic smile on her face.

“I would like to have father’s snacks!”

“Haha, I can’t refuse your requests.”

I pat her head **pat-pat** and I agree with a smile. Of course, my inner thoughts are too rough for Laurier’s. Leaving the decisions to them was the best idea I had.

Villainess Father – c46 Good Fortune

“I wonder, is this the first time we went out as just the three of us?”

While musing at this, I was sitting in a horse drawn carriage while supporting Sasha while Laurier rides on my knee. While muttering that the balance is bad, in the side, Sasha smiles at my words and replies.

“I believe so. Yet, I’m happy to be with darling and Laurier as a family.”

... What a nice girl! Sasha, what are you saying? How can I even respond? I fumbled in response to such heavenly words.

Saving me from my peril, Laurier suddenly said that I shouldn’t act like this..

“Father, it’s not for you.”

(E/N: I don’t know how the conversation switched like this)

“Hmm? Are you referring to the maids?”

Laurier shook her head and pointed to Sasha’s abdomen.

“My sibling is with me. That’s why it’s not for you, Father”

“I see... That is certainly true”

I was about to ascend to the heavens and leave my family behind. How dangerous. Thanking Laurier for her courageous efforts by patting her head while she sat at my lap, I began formulating a response.

“How admirable, Laurier. You already have the thinking of an elder sister, don’t you?”

“Really...?”

My cheeks loosened as Laurier laughed with joy; I put more effort into stroking her head. While losing myself in the cuteness, I suddenly felt a soft touch on my right shoulder and a pleasant fragrance coming off of it. Turning to see what it was, I saw Sasha sulking a little bit while leaning on my shoulder.

“Dear... I’m a little tired, so please lend me your shoulder.”

“I would be delighted to. If you’re tired, would you like to sleep on my lap?”

“Dear, you musn’t make jokes like that.”

Grinning from ear to ear, I look at Sasha as she pouted while lightly scolding me. As we have become more relaxed with each other, Sasha has become more playful with me, responding with more of her feelings like this.

To be blunt, if I professed my love to her 100 times, 3 times out of 100, she would have a chance to react like this. Sasha is truly a treasure. Indeed.

Lost in my thoughts for the umpteenth time that day, I felt Laurier attempting to get my attention.

“Father, are you and mother making jokes with each other?”

“Yes we are. You can have fun with Selena when we get to the palace.”

“Yeah!”

For some reason, Laurier and Selena have gotten along extremely well. As for myself, I’m not very comfortable with the princess, so I tended to avoid her if I could. Instead, I talk directly to the adults to see if Laurier and Selena are getting along. Sometimes Sasha does this for me, but I don’t want to put any strain on her today. I suppose that’s the goal for today?

Enjoying the family time in the carriage, I made a schedule in my mind for the future.

(E/N Note: Sorry about PRing this late, school just started for me, and everything is actually hell right now.)

Villainess' Father His Majesty and Queen's response –c47

After a short while, we reached the castle. I reached over to grab Sasha's hand and began to slowly head towards the garden. I asked the guards if the party will take place outside because of how fine the weather was today.

"Sasha, are you feeling alright today?"

"Yes, dear. If you could, I would like if you were to walk more slowly though."

"Mother, are you okay?"

"Yes. Thank you Laurier."

Sasha knew that Laurier and I were walking with extra care as to not overburden her. Gazing at the two of them, the tender feeling in my heart made its way up to my face, and I unknowingly began to smile. I wonder if it's normal for someone to become so happy over just walking side by side with their spouse and child. Yeah, it has to be.

Arriving at the courtyard, there were already four people waiting for us.

One of them was, of course, His Majesty, the King. Next to him was the second princess, Selena, who was chatting with the capture target prince whom I met the other day. Lastly there was.... I froze in place. Selena? No, Selena was already there. She was a beautiful woman that looked as if Selena grew up.

"Your Grace, I deeply apologize for my late arrival. Thank you for your invitation today."

"Oh, ah... welcome, Duke Fall"

"Thank you. Your family seems to be doing well."

"Duke Fall seems to have changed as well."

Queen Resilia, responded as she looked at the three of us and noticed something different.

(T/N: it's been a while since I have TL'ed and her name how it is spelled might be wrong, I'll have to change it, when I reread the novel again)

"Yes, I have since reflected on my frankly idiotic behavior thus far. I now love and cherish my family with my entire being."

"Is that right? It's been quite some time since Sasha has gotten pregnant, but congratulations nonetheless."

"Yes, Resilia, thank you for your concern."

I also greeted the two other remaining people, wondering if they were congratulating me about Sasha's pregnancy or my improved relationship with my family.

"Selena, it's been a while. Thank you for always getting along with Laurier. I believe this is the first time I've greeted you properly, Celeu."

"Good morning, Laurier is always a pleasure to have. Ah, come on Celeu, you can't hide. Say hello to Duke Fall.."

As he was encouraged by Selena, Celeu rapidly looked between me and Selena several times and began speaking nervously.

"Hello Duke Fall. I am the Second Prince, Celeu. Oh, and, um... thank you very much!"

Celeu bows his head after saying so. I felt his sincerity and had a good feeling about him, although who knows how he will become in the future?. I looked at him, smiling as gently as possible and tried my best to encourage him.

"Don't worry. If there is a person in need, it is natural to help. If your heart is cleared up even a little by my words, it was worth it."

"Yes! I feel like I'm now able to move forward a little from your help."

"Then, that's all I need."

I continued to simply smile, trying my best to look good in front of Laurier and Sasha, despite the eyes of Celeu worshiping me like a hero.

At that point, Laurier, after listening to Celeu's story, only commented, "I don't really understand, but father is handsome as always."

Villaines Father – c48 Small talk before the main topic

“Yes, you’re going to be Laurier-san’s onee-chan.”

(T/N: Should Keep it without normal Japanese, cause the kanji for sister is Elder Sister, so it turns into onee-chan and the honorifics?)

“Yes!”

“Then when you grow up, you’ll want to have tea with her.”

Laurier and Selena were talking with each other. I didn’t show up at the tea party so much, so I felt a little relieved when I saw them getting along normally.

“This is really delicious... I envy Sasha who can eat this every day.”

“Yes. darling’ ss’ sweets are very delicious.”

“Fufufu, it looks like they’ve gotten along. I wonder what’s the best part of the night?”

“Huh!? Well, that’s...”

On the other hand, this is a conversation between Sasha and the Queen. It’s nice to get along with friends I haven’t met in a long time, but a little bit peculiar, and it’ll show up soon. I’m the only one who makes Sasha look so cute! Or rather, the queen doesn’t let Sasha talk too much. I don’t want to show others that Sasha, has a cute face, who is not immune to that kind of talk.

“But... the sweets you’ve brought are delicious, I, who doesn’t like sweets, can eat them as well, too.”

“That’s great, please don’t refrain from eating too, Celeu-san.”

“Ye-yes! It’s delicious!”

....and this is the remaining male group, drinking tea slowly like this because the women are too good friends, and as there is not a single flower at all. Since his majesty has not yet come up with a real topic, I decided to ask for the time being

“Your Majesty. What do you think about your children’s future?”

“What do you think?”

“Educational policy is not a big deal, but for example, if your child clearly shows what kind of job he or she wants to do work in the future, will you accept it?”

“Hum... it’s a difficult part. I, of course, want to respect the child’s will, but the country may use force if it is necessary.”

“Will the result be terrible?”

“I want to avoid that.”

His Majesty answers so with a sigh. After all, the weight of what I have might be different when becoming a king. It might still have been good to have been reincarnated into another Duke. Well, even if I was reincarnated as a king, I would do anything for my children and my wife.

“Anyway... you’ve gotten softer, rounded Duke Fohr”

(T/N: I Might change the name to Fohr, as I reread the raws and It goes to Fall, but an Unclassified name is Fohr, and tbh Fohr sounds nobler. Tell me what you think)

“Is that so?”

“Oh, the previous you were more sharp like a sword, so the sharpness is like tearing everything up around.”

After all, it might seem quite different from the person who knows Callis in front of me.

“Because I found a scabbard for that sword.”

(T/N: he Is referencing to love he has found)

“You mean your wife?”

“Well, what is important to me is my family. It might have disappeared the sharpness like before because it understood it. You know what I mean?”

“In my case, I spent a little too much time at work.”

I think it’s very difficult to live with a Harem. I don’t need a harem because Sasha is enough. I don’t know if I’m going to be able to love another woman other than Sasha. Yeah.

Villainess' Father – Chapter 49

3 Main Topics

“Well then, Selena, Celeu. Please show Laurier around the garden if you can.”

His Majesty said this after a while. It seemed like he wanted to discuss the main subject. At his words, I turned towards Laurier and smiled.

“Laurier, the garden here is beautiful, so you should take a look.”

“What about you, father?”

“I’d like to go with you, but I need to talk with His Majesty. Serena and Celeu will teach you a lot.”

“Okay!”

After saying that, the three of them left. I sent my daughter off with a smile and then looked at His Majesty.

“Well... Your Majesty. May I ask you what your purpose in inviting me to this tea party?”

“Hmm, about that.”

Saying that His Majesty’s expression became a little serious.

“There is a reason why I called you this time. First of all is an internal investigation of our country.”

“Internal investigation?”

“Oh, I’d like to tell you the secret reason about this internal investigation.”

Perhaps the internal investigation was to be conducted among the nobility. But the secret behind it...

I glanced around and then asked His Majesty,

“Why me? There are many other people who are trustworthy.”

“Firstly, the breadth of your peerage and friendship circle is broad. But... The most important reason is that I can’t trust anyone other than you.”

“...Has Your Majesty discovered something?”

“Yes. If my original information is true, there is a high possibility that Duke Grene, the Prime Minister, is secretly communicating with another country.”

I almost sighed at those words. To think that the prime minister of this country was a traitor...

“It would be best to cut him off sooner rather than later. The question is whether anyone other than him is colluding with other countries.”

“So that’s what the internal investigation is for? But is it alright to trust me? Based on that reasoning, I’m also suspicious.”

“Yes, but this decision was based on the current you and your recent reputation. That’s why I had your wife and Miss Laurier come all the way here as well.”

I see . . . Laurier and Sasha were called in to show my current situation. They’ve probably been trying to find out the truth about Serena from Laurier recently, and His Majesty made his decision from that. Well, as long as Laurier and Sasha aren’t harmed, I’ll be as friendly to this country as possible. . . .

“The second request is for you to be the next prime minister.”

“Me? That really is...”

It was too troublesome, so I tried to refrain but His Majesty seemed to misunderstand.

“I understand what you want to say. Certainly, there may be further opposition from other nobles for Duke Fohr to be connected to the Royal family even more. However, there is no suitable person other than you.”

“Your Majesty ... It is an honor to have my abilities appreciated, but it is a very overrated evaluation.”

“Don’t be humble. I am pleased with your performance during the last six months.”

The last six months? Could it be that my management of the province and the work for the country after I became Callis have been evaluated by any chance? I’m sure I have been doing it differently compared to the old Callis, but I wonder if it had changed that much?

Well, I’ve changed Callis’ sloppy management to a more thorough system, I’ve eliminated the slums by increasing employment opportunities, I’ve donated more to orphanages, I’ve spent more on improving the town, I haven’t raised taxes . . . But it shouldn’t have changed that much.

(T/N: he is talking about 6 months ago when he 1st got transported into the otome game)

While I remained silent, His Majesty continued with a bitter laugh.

“Well, I hope you decide on this matter later in your own time. Finally, I want to suggest a marriage proposal for Miss Laurier.”

“Is the partner Celeu-sama?”

“Ah. Celeu was already secretly decided to be the Prince. I thought Miss Laurier could be his fiancée.”

Was there such a prospect after all? Is that why Laurier and Sasha were also invited? After I took a sip of tea, I spoke as calmly as possible.

“Laurier has just turned four. I think it’s too early for her to get engaged.”

“But wouldn’t you need to decide on her fiancé eventually?”

“With that being said, the other party is the Crown Prince. I would prefer not to force a harsh queen’s education on my daughter.”

(T/N: UmU, Think about your daughter’s feelings first)

After saying that, I smiled at Sasha who was looking anxiously at me from her seat by my side, and then said to His Majesty,

“Your Majesty. It’s an honor, but what I want most is the happiness of my family. So I’ll protect my daughter until she falls in love on her own.”

When I said that, His Majesty grinned and said,

“If that’s so, it would be fine if Miss Laurier came to like Celeu, right?”

“I will not object if it is the will of the person in question. However, it is not good to force it. I have no intention of making my daughter marry for politics.”

His Majesty laughed pleasantly at my words.

“Then, I’ll give up for now. But it doesn’t change the fact that Miss Laurier is still a contender for Celeu’s fiancée. I’ll officially propose their engagement sooner or later, but I’m looking forward to it because by that time, Celeu will have made Miss Laurier fall for him.”

“If that happens, I will accept it obediently. What I want is my family to be happy.”

I answered His Majesty with a sigh for bringing up Laurier’s marriage, even when he was forcing me into a troublesome job.

Villainess' Father – Chapter 49.5

Extra: Quiet Girls and Boys' Romance

(T/N: This is in 3rd Person)

“Wow ...! “

Laurier burst out unintentionally and her expression was as though flowers had bloomed around her face. Serena spoke with a smile when she saw Laurier being like this.

“How? This area is especially beautiful during this time, isn't it?”

“Yes! Thank you, Selena!”

“I'm glad you're happy.”

Seeing the other boy fidgeting, Selena sighed..

“Celeu, I know how you feel, but let's show Laurier around together.”

“Sist-, but...”

“You're in too much of a rush to meet Duke Fohr that you so admire.”

Selena didn't know how he felt from being helped mentally by Callis so much, however she still took care of him as an older sister should.

“Father and Duke Fohr are talking about important things now. So for now, show Laurier around with me.”

“Ye-yes ... excuse me, Laurier.”

“It's okay!”

Laurier laughed brightly. As though Callis was watching, Serena hugged her and said, “I'm not going to let you go.”

“She's cute after all! Laurier-san is cute after all!”

“Nee-chan, you're troubling Laurier.”

Saying this, he pulled his sister away from a surprised Laurier. Then Celeu looked at Laurier and said,

“Laurier's father is wonderful, isn't he?”

“Yes! My father is so cool!”

Laurier answered without hesitation. Celeu whispered deeply to Laurier,

“Duke Fohr is very cool, isn't he? He's kind and smart, and I heard from my father that he's also strong in swordsmanship?”

“Yes, I've seen it before. He's probably stronger than the knights' leader.”

“Father is very strong!”

Laurier puffed out her chest proudly. While holding back his sister, who seemed like she would hug her again, Celeu said,

“I was saved by Duke Fohr. Duke Fohr told me that even though she was the child of the first Queen, she should find something that she does better than her older brother from the second Queen.”

These were surely words that anyone could have said. But that’s precisely why the person who first voiced this would leave a strong impression. Can I say it was imprinted? Laurier nodded and said, “I know what you mean.”

“My father is kinder than anyone else and stronger than anyone else!”

“Yes. Laurier, can I go with my sister next time?”

“Yes!”

Such a dazzling smile. Is it because the same person is burned so strongly into both of their memories? The two of them were convinced that they would strangely be on good terms.

Villainess' Father – Chapter 50

Don't Worry

*A little flirting (´▽`)

“Did the two of you enjoy today's visit?”

I asked Sasha next to me and Laurier, who was sitting on my knees, on our way home in the carriage. Laurier replied cheerfully.

“Yes! Together with Selena-sama and Celeu-sama, we talked a lot.

“Oh, I see? That's great.”

I get a complicated feeling whenever the Celeu is mentioned. Hearing an innocent reply from Laurier, I feel a little worried.

“They said that they will come over sometime to play.”

“...is that so?”

Well, if Laurier is looking forward to it, I shouldn't ruin it for her. But Laurier, why are you looking forward to Celeu visiting you so much? Was it love at first sight? It's possible, but that is unacceptable because our Laurie is cute. However, if it is love at first sight, it would be difficult to destroy the flag.

“Sasha, did you become a little more relaxed?”

“Yes, it's been a long time since I've been able to have a pleasant conversation with Lesilia.”

(T/N: I changed Resilia to Lesilia, I read it wrong my bad)

Sasha smiled when she said so. If it became Sasha's reliever somehow, there might have been some worth to this tea ceremony.

“Um... dear. Was that okay?”

(T/N: Well umm 旦那 this mean Husband adding 様 will make it master. Saying it husband is weird, I Don't know if I should keep it as Darling/Dear or use Master)

“What was?”

“You refused to accept his Majesty's proposal.”

Sasha is probably thinking about Laurier's engagement. Although I am also worried about the refusal, I replied to Sasha with a smile.

“I want my children to be happy. I can't deny that it would be a political marriage if it goes through, but...”

I began stroking Laurier's head.

“I want this child to find someone she likes by her own will.”

“?”

Laurier tilted her head and smiled pleasantly as I stroke her.

“Well, you don't have to worry too much. Sasha's kindness is good for me, but right now I'm the first one.”

“I'm fine. But my husband is always worried about me and Laurier.”

I should have noticed it a little earlier. So as to not let Sasha worry about this, I put my hand on Sasha's cheek and smiled gently.

“Thank you. I’m sorry for making you worry and I won’t act so boldly anymore. I don’t want my beloved wife to worry.”

Sasha blushed a little from happiness when I said that. Oh my god, she is so cute! Just who is it that claimed and married such a pretty pregnant woman?

It’s me. Well, specifically the former Callis, but now that I am Callis, I can conclude that Sasha is mine!

And that is how I returned to the mansion with my beloved Sasha and Laurier.

Villainess' Father – Chapter 51

Princess's scheme?

“Good evening, Duke Fohr.”

“Selena, I’m working.”

This place is the office. I sighed to Selena, who entered the room abruptly and interrupted my work.

“I heard that Celeu is with you today. Why did you come here?”

“I wonder what kind of reaction you’d make if I said that I want to leave my brother with his fiancée candidate alone together?”

Unintentionally, I broke the brush I was holding in half. While keeping calm as much as possible, I responded back.

“In that case, I’ll stop you with all my power.”

“Oh? You seem calmer than I thought. Are you really against Celeu’s and Laurier’s engagement?”

“Yeah. Well actually, if Celeu-sama becomes the Prince of Kuzut just like the game, I will definitely stop the engagement. However, right now he is still only a child. I will not stop it if he truly does like Laurier.”

(T/N: Kuzu 通り Means street or something similar I don’t get what it’s referencing I know its the otome game but I’m at a loss)

When I said that, she looked a little surprised and smiled.

“Maybe my brother will develop a different personality than the game.”

“Any basis?”

“You haven’t realized it? It’s you.”

“What? Me?”

“My brother has begun to respect you a lot ever since he has been saved by your words. That and with the sweets from the other day combined, you are thought to be ‘the person he longed for’.”

“That’s stupid.”

Selena sighed at the fact that it is normal to be thankful for small things like that and yet I cannot believe that Celeu would think highly of me for what I did.

“Well, aside from your lack of self-awareness, there will probably be no problem if you only have the two of them for now. He’s still a child after all.”

“Don’t forget that you also look like a child.”

“Well, putting that aside, can you tell me about the conversation you had with my father?”

“... how much do you know?”

“I only know that my father requested something from you based on how I was asked to leave my seat with Laurier.”

I sighed and talked briefly of what I knew about the allegations of betrayal of the prime minister and the investigation and the invitation of the next prime minister. What Selena said afterward, however, made everything I said become of little value.

“I see, this explains about the information I have frequently obtained from Laurier about you.”

“May I ask how you intend to use that information? You’re not interested in getting involved in this, are you?”

“Yes. Even with this, I am grateful to my father. I was thinking of helping you.”

It sounds like expression with some implications, but having someone with connections and voice power will be beneficial for me.

“So, is the Duke Fohr going to be a prime minister?”

“I wonder. It’s a heavy load for me.”

“What is your real intention?”

“Of course, it’s troublesome, so I’m going to push the role onto someone else.”

Selena said with a laugh.

“If so, then how about training one?”

“Training? Do you have anyone in mind?”

“Yes, he is not someone unrelated to you or Laurier. He is the son of the Duke Macbeth Grene and is one of the targets of the Otome game.”

Villainess' Father – Chapter 52+53

Chapter 52: A Party with the Prime Minister

“No, no, I didn’t think I’d be able to invite Duke Fall to my home like this.”

Speaking to me with a transparent smile was the Prime Minister of this country, Duke Grene. The location is Duke Grene’s house. I received information that he would be hosting a dinner party, so here I am.

I really don’t like this kind of party, so unless absolutely necessary I won’t accept invitations to them, but this time it’s necessary. Sasha and Laurier aren’t with me this time. I’d rather not bring them to a place like this. Besides, Sasha needs to stay at home to take care of her health, and Laurier is too young to bring to events like this.

“The pleasure is all mine. Thank you for the invitation, Duke Grene. As always, this is a splendid mansion, it really makes me envious.”

I meant how much of an extreme waste of money this mansion cost, but Duke Grene looked happy to be praised.

“Hahaha! If it’s Duke Fall, you’re welcome at any time. By the way, I see you didn’t bring your wife and daughter today?”

“Regretfully, my wife isn’t feeling well today. I left my daughter behind to assist her.”

“Oh? If that’s the case, your daughter must be very clever. I wish that my foolish son would follow in her footsteps.”

‘Don’t call your own child “foolish”!’ Although I wanted to retort with that, I held it in and continued with a smile.

“Ahh, that’s reminds me. If I’m not mistaken, my daughter and your son are close together in age. When he’s free, please send him to my house to play.”

“It’s a welcome offer, but... come to think of it, has Duke Fall decided on a fiancé for her yet?

Duke Grene turned towards me with a face full of greed. Perhaps he was concerned that Laurier had already been engaged to Celeu-sama. Since after his wife died, Duke Grene had a second child with a mistress, he surely wants to earn as much profit from his first son’s engagement as possible. Although his family holds the same Ducal status as mine, so I understand why he’s aiming for Laurier... it’s unpleasant to think of Laurier being sent off to this man’s house. I can say with certainty that Laurier will be unhappy.

Without mentioning such feelings, I continued speaking with a strained smile.

“Actually, I haven’t yet. I’ve been waiting to find the right partner for her.”

“Ahh, is that so?”

As Duke Grene gave a meaningful smile, feelings of disgust welled up in me. How strange... no matter what he says, I feel disgusted. It’s like I’ve had a psychological aversion to him from the start.

As a parent, I just want to make my child happy, but he sees his children as nothing but tools. That probably makes us incompatible.

“By the way, I’ve heard that Duke Fall is capable of making splendid deserts. If you don’t mind, please teach me how to make them next time.”

After that, I continued drinking and chatting with Duke Grene using ambiguous language to draw some more information out of him... That was the first time I’ve ever felt that passing time while drinking was unpleasant.

Hi all, I’m Rewind, a second translator for Villainous Father. I really like this story – there just aren’t enough Otome-game-esc stories from a man’s perspective out there, let alone from the father of the

Villainess', and this is a good one. I'm reading along with you all, so here's to bringing Sasha and Laurier further happiness.

Chapter 53: Taking a Breather in the Middle of the Dinner Party

“Haaaa...”

I sighed unconsciously. Besides talking with Duke Grene, I also spoke with all of the other nobles he invited to his house, and every last one of them were obsessed with political power and social status. I just can't see eye-to-eye with them. As a noble, that may be the correct way of thinking in a sense, but on a personal level I just can't agree.

It would be a mistake if I didn't take a breather outside while I can.

“... Ow.”

I heard a voice along with the sound of rustling of bushes.

After making sure there were no other nobles in my surroundings, I called out to the voice.

“Won't you come out? There's no need to hide in such a place.”

The shadowy figure stayed silent for a moment, but soon came out after seemingly making up their mind. It's a blue-haired boy, about the same age as Laurier? I probably know who this child is, but I asked him without saying it.

“What are you doing out here?”

“... I came to see Father.”

“I see... did your father have anything to do with you hiding here?”

“Not really...”

The boy looked away after saying so. I don't think there would be any other children here at this time of day, but I continued by asking despite knowing the answer.

“What kind of person is your father?”

“... He's trash. The worst. Always acting self-important, bossy, living with another person after my mother died, and hardly ever comes home. In a word, he's scum.”

He ended with a bitter smile in spite of saying so much.

“Then, have you come to complain to your father?”

“... I don't know. I hate Father. I can't forgive Father for betraying Mother. But, I can't do anything because I have no power...”

“Then, what if you had that power?”

“That's impossible...”

“Why is it impossible?”

“Since Father is the Prime Minister. There's no way a child like me could ever win against him...”

Well, he seems to be quite clever for a child his age. His language is a bit rough, but other than that he can stay calm and view the world objectively. If it's this child, won't it be all right?

“Then, if you could be the Prime Minister instead of your father... what would you do?”

He looked at me with a surprised expression after I said that.

“... Who are you?”

“I’m Callis Fall, head of the Ducal House of Fall, and a father with a child I dearly love.

The boy stayed silent for a moment... and then after having seemingly decided something, he spoke.

“... Please tell me. How can I defeat my father?”

That was my first encounter with the boy... the eldest son of Duke Grene, and the capture target known as the Duke’s son, Macbeth Grene.

The Engagement between a Capture Target and the Princess

“I’m pleased to make your acquaintance. I am Macbeth Grene, Duke Grene’s son.”

“Nice to meet you, Macbeth. I am Serena, the Second Princess.”

The reincarnated princess and a capture target introduced themselves before my eyes, and I’m here for some reason. An old man sitting in-between these two as if to mediate as they introduce themselves. It feels surreal, but I kept silent and quietly watched to see what the princess would do.

“And so? Why did Serena-sama invite me here?”

“Oh? I think you know this already, but that’s not a very gentlemanly thing to ask.”

“Sorry, but besides family, I attend to others as little as possible.”

“Fufu, I really like that about you... Now then, Macbeth.”

With a smile, Serena-sama continued.

“I’ll get straight to the point. Won’t you get engaged to me?”

“... Hah?”

“Won’t you get engaged to me?”

“No, I heard you just fine... But, why?”

“That’s easy. After you drag your father down from his position as Duke and as Prime Minister, you will have to shoulder both.”

Put simply, that’s too heavy a burden for a child to bear. As expected, Macbeth wouldn’t be able to do it on his own. He let out a sigh and replied.

“So, ‘if you and I get engaged, you’ll have the Crown’s backing,’ is what you mean?”

“You’re quick to understand, that’s fantastic. As I thought, you truly are qualified to be my fiancé.”

“... But is there any merit for you to offer that?”

“Merit? Ahhh, that’s simple. I like you.”

“... Huh?”

“I like you.”

Macbeth stared, flabbergasted. Well, if she says it so suddenly, of course he’d be confused. After staying frozen for a while, Macbeth hesitatingly replied.

“Uhm... today is the first time we’ve met, right?”

“Oh? Well, that’s true for you.”

“?”

There’s no way Macbeth would understand. This is the first time they’re meeting and he’s suddenly being told “I like you.” That said, I have an inkling of why she would say that.

“Well, if you count memories from your past life...”

Macbeth looked confused at my muttered words, but Serena just winked at me and answered.

“Aren’t you the same?”

“I can’t deny...”

The Otome game we played in our past lives. Serena probably likes Macbeth because of her knowledge of him from it. Well, although I get it, it will be hard for Macbeth to understand that love.

“I asked Duke Fall here to witness this engagement. When Macbeth eventually becomes this country’s Prime Minister and succeeds his father as head of the Ducal House of Grene, I hope that Duke Fall will aid us as much as possible.”

“Well, if it’s for my daughter’s friend Serena-sama and Macbeth-kun’s sake, I’ll cooperate to the best of my ability.”

Or rather, if the Princess takes one of the capture targets, then the trouble that Laurier will face in the future becomes that much less.

“Serena-sama... you won’t have an affair?”

“Of course.”

“Will... will you love me?”

“Yes. Unconditionally.”

“Will... will you stay with me forever? You won’t die like my mother?”

“I will be by your side until the day you die. So... you don’t need to worry.”

The Princess gazed at him gently with eyes like she was soothing an abandoned puppy.

It's a beautiful scene, but I can't help but think that this result is yet another of the Princess' calculations, so I felt a chill run down my spine.

In that manner, I somehow saw the engagement between those two, but... I'll keep it a secret that I thought to end it early and return home to pamper Sasha.

Chapter 55: The Secret Ingredient is Love

“Hm Hmm~♪”

An old man like me is humming to himself while cooking. From an outsider’s perspective, I must look really strange, but I keep going without minding it. For me, standing in the kitchen making sweets for those two is more of a reward than work.

Well... I’ve been working too much lately, so I want to cherish this time. Down time is important so that I can bond with Laurier and Sasha more——

“Uhm... Duke Fall...”

——And yet, for some reason, the capture target prince is here in the kitchen to visit me. Oh well.

I quickly switched modes to keep up appearances.

“Oh, Celeu-sama. What a pleasant surprise this is. Did you come here today to have tea with Laurier?”

“Y- Yes! I came with my sister.”

“I see... So, what can I do for you? Were the tea and sweets today not to your liking?”

“N- no! That’s not it! They were really good!”

“I’m glad to hear that, but in that case, what brings you here?”

After I asked, Celeu-sama seemed to hesitate for a moment.

“Uhm... Duke Fall, how are you so good at making sweets?”

“Hm? Well... since I think about the people I’m cooking for as I make them, then it’s natural that they turn out delicious.”

“It’s because you’re thinking about who you’re cooking for?”

“That’s right.”

As Celeu-sama pondered over how that would make something delicious, I chuckled a little and explained further.

“It might be unexpected, but that’s my number one trick. I always cook with the hope that my wife and daughter will be able to enjoy some delicious food. To ‘think about who you’re cooking for as you cook’ means you consider whether or not the food will put a smile on their faces. It’s that simple.”

“So you consider whether or not the food will put a smile on their faces...”

“That’s right. If you know the tastes and preferences of who you’re cooking for, you can naturally tailor it to their liking. Well, other than that, it’s important to make it with love.”

“W- With love?”

“It doesn’t matter what kind of love it is. Whether it’s love for a friend, for your family, or for your significant other, that’s not important. Regardless of what kind it is, the quality of the final product will be enhanced nonetheless.”

Then, thinking that I’ve talked too much, I turned my eyes back to look at Celeu-sama—— But for some reason, he was gazing up at me with glittering eyes.

“Duke Fall is always thinking about such amazing things!”

“Well, I would consider this much effort to be only proper...”

In my case, since it's for Sasha's and Laurier's sakes, it's inevitable that I'd put in so much effort. But Celeu-sama who does not know that nodded as if convinced about something.

"I'll try my best to always think about the other party! Thank you so much for the advice!"

"No, it's nothing, please don't worry about it."

Staring at his excessively pure, smiling face, I felt a smile appear on my face, too. Well, I still don't know if this child will turn out the way his character did in-game, but I can't imagine him going down the wrong path if he continues to so openly and honestly show his feelings.